

# JAZZ MONTHLY



*This photograph of SON HOUSE, and another one on page 24, is (are) by Valerie Wilmer*

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4<sup>20p</sup>

No. 188

OCTOBER, 1970



# RECORD SHOPS

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# THE JAZZ SCENE

## 4. JAZZ MAGAZINES

**B**Y COMPARISON with the struggles of musicians to attain a minimum of economic stability at the present time, the problems of jazz magazine editors and publishers may seem of slight moment. I could, if I were so disposed, state a no doubt biased case in favour of the usefulness of jazz magazines to musicians (though many would question this!), collectors and record companies alike, but in as far as there are collectors disposed to buy magazines, others willing to write for them for next to nothing, and publishers willing to keep them in existence on a distinctly non-profit making basis, and the fact that whoever reads this will fall into the first category, I think it fair to assume that there will be a certain measure of agreement on the subject.

All magazines of limited circulations have been facing an increasingly difficult time over the past few years, with constantly rising costs in every area of production and no end to the process in sight. The new scale of postal charges announced by the G.P.O., if unmodified could well mean the end of a further batch of magazines. In addition to the problems common to all minority interest periodicals, jazz magazines face some that are peculiar to their field, not the least being the shrinkage of advertising revenue. In other European countries equipment manufacturers have over the years, taken a fair amount of advertising in jazz publications, but this has been rare in England. With advertising revenue limited in the main to record companies in this country, the fact that fewer and fewer jazz LPs are being issued means that the companies have cut their spending in the field, but even more relevant is the growth of periodicals devoted to the pop music. The big money today is made from pop records, so increasingly a higher proportion of the advertising budget of the companies goes to publications devoted to that subject. The pirate companies, who might make up some of the loss, are not generally working on budgets that allow for much advertising, and prefer to come to private arrangements with some of the smaller magazines at little or no cost to themselves. In addition they are often unwilling to court too much publicity in the more widely distributed magazines, for reasons which I need not spell out to *Jazz Monthly* readers. With little advertising available, jazz magazine publishers are forced to charge a price that at least ensures the recovery of production costs, which some potential readers may wrongly consider to be excessive. The recent increase in the price of this magazine to four shillings was necessary simply to ensure its survival, and we decided to use a portion of the increased revenue to improve the production, yet immediately the August issue was printed we found that the paper used increased the weight of the issue beyond four ounces, with a commensurate steep rise in the costs of mailing each magazine, so that we were forced to use a slightly less weighty paper from September. *Jazz Monthly* is fortunate in having gained a readership who are conscious of the problems involved in attempting to publish a magazine of its type, but if over the next year or two rising costs of production and postal charges force further price increases there must come a point when even the most sympathetic readers will rebel. I use this magazine as an illustration of the problems simply because it is easier to discuss the situation in concrete terms in this manner, but the same applies to virtually all minority appeal publications,

with the small literary magazines probably being the worst hit. Perhaps I should close this paragraph by reassuring the suspicious or economically distressed reader that the foregoing was not a subtle lead-in to an announcement of a further price rise in the immediate future!

**A**N INTERESTING fact is that the general jazz magazine, with distribution through major retail outlets, is now virtually a European phenomenon. On the American continent there is only the generally excellent *Coda*, published in Toronto, for I assume that most *Jazz Monthly* readers will not view either *Down Beat* or *Jazz and Pop* as jazz periodicals. In the U.S.A. there is, of course, the perennial *Record Research*, but this does not claim to be jazz magazine in the sense of *Jazz Monthly*, *Jazz Hot* or *Jazz Podium* for example. In Europe, outside of England with *Jazz Journal*, *Jazz Monthly* and *Storyville* plus the blues magazines *Blues Unlimited* and *Blues World*, and specialist publications of a more modest nature such as *Discographical Forum* and *Matrix* (England, without doubt, produces most jazz periodicals), there are three jazz magazines published regularly in France, and one each in Germany, Italy, Finland, Poland and Sweden — there is also an international publication *Jazz Forum*, published from Poland — with a small number of specialist periodicals of moderate production standards appearing intermittently. It has been interesting to study our European counterparts over the past few years.

With the occasional exception — M. Hugues Panassié's *Bulletin Du Hot Club de France* for example — European jazz magazines appear to be more heavily committed to what is contemporary in jazz than the English magazines, with less material of a historical or research nature. I do not know, and it would be impertinent of me to speculate on, the economic situation within which the various European jazz magazines operate, but I would guess that a couple at least have been hit by the dwindling jazz interest of recent years using production economies and reduced number of pages as a pointer. Few have resorted to attempting to incorporate pop material, and when this has been tried it has usually been short lived and half-hearted. Like the English magazines the European ones give the impression of being run by genuine enthusiasts, in general spurred by hopes of survival rather than huge circulations. There is, however, one European jazz magazine that has astonished me for some time by its size, excellent production and general air of prosperity. I have now been told that it is subsidised by a 'girlie' type publication, a delectable prop denied to the less fortunate amongst us.

**T**HE NUMBER and health of jazz magazines probably reflects in an oblique manner the state of the music, for when jazz has a reasonably wide following there will be enough enthusiasts around to support publications. The survival of jazz periodicals in the next few years depends on such factors as the record companies being willing to devote a small part of their advertising revenue to jazz releases, the preparedness of collectors to pay an economic price for them, and no further contraction in the jazz audience. For those who believe that jazz magazines, with all their faults, serve a useful function, the prospects are interesting, nerve racking and at the same time challenging.



**S**OME VERY able pianists were active in Chicago during the 1950s. They included Ahmad Jamal, Junior Mance, Billy Wallace and Norman Simmons. Jamal and Mance enjoyed much commercial success for several years and are still in demand at the helm of their own groups. Wallace retired to obscurity while Simmons, for almost a decade, was an accompanist for the top singers.

Sammy (Norman) Simmons was born in Chicago on October 6, 1929, so celebrates his 41st birthday this month. He studied at the Chicago School of Music from 1945-49 and was playing with Clifford Jordan at the age of 16. He later became house pianist at the Bee-Hive and played with Charlie Parker, Lester Young, Dexter Gordon, Wardell Gray, J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding, Sonny Stitt and many other great swing and bebop stars. Norman recorded with Paul Bascomb, Wardell Gray, Red Rodney and under his own name in the 1950s. He gained international recognition as an arranger for his work on Johnny Griffin's "Big Soul Band" album, recently reissued here on Riverside, and subsequently arranged for and accompanied Carmen McRae on many records including a fine set on Time. He is featured fairly extensively on the first Johnny Griffin/Eddie Lockjaw Davis album

(Prestige 7282) and more of his arrangements for Johnny Griffin were presented on Griffin's LP "White Gardenia" (Riverside RLP387) and Griffin's "Little Giant" set. He was once again heard as a pianist on "Johnny Griffin's Studio Jazz Party" (Riverside RLP338). The one LP under his own name was issued by Argo in 1956 and is a collector's item today.

His strong, rhythmic style is heard to good effect with Red Rodney (Fantasy 3208) and on four titles with Wardell Gray which were reissued on a French Top Rank collection some years ago. In this lengthy interview Norman discusses his influences, objectives, observations of singers and the role of the piano accompanist and he also sheds much light on the Chicago music scene of the 1950s. I have always felt that jazz activity in that city at that time was inadequately documented and Norman's comments confirm this suspicion. So many talented people were on the scene there then including Gene Ammons, Red Rodney, Cliff Jordan, Griffin and so many others. With hindsight we can see that Chicago's contribution was as important as, say, Detroit's. Norman's perception is evident from his story and it only remains for me to thank him for the time and trouble he went to in preparing it and also for this rare photograph which he kindly made available from his files.— M.G.

MUSICIANS TALKING

## Norman Simmons

### talks to Mark Gardner

**L**OOKING AS FAR back as I can to the beginning there stood a dark, wooden Story and Clark upright piano. We lived in the same neighbourhood as the Coles and at one time, according to my mother, my aunt was supposed to have married Nat Cole's older brother Eddie. Nat, was very young at that time but Eddie, she said, was a regular attendant at the house parties she gave and he played on that old upright. My cousin, my brother and I played *under* the piano. It was a player piano with lots of levers and gears plus foot pedals. . . and my first space ship.

My cousin's Mom taught me to play *Coonshine baby*, in F sharp naturally, for it was a tune which only involved the black notes; the bridge had to be played with the left hand crossing the right. The second tune I learned was one her husband played — sort of a boogie blues; I still use it sometimes. Everybody had that one song they could play or some special little dance they could do to break up a party.

They say my aunt strived to be a dancer but she had a weak heart. I can remember my mother owning a wind-up Victrola — one of the first. You had to wind it up to make the turntable go round and buy steel needles by the package; to me though it was another aspect of my space controls — lots of things to create with. There were more parties that I remember in the next apartment we rented. My mother belonged to a social club and they would give small affairs in our apartment. We always had large apartments and by opening three connecting rooms and taking down the furniture they could create a dance hall. All the music was jazz as I recall

but it was just music to me then for all the music I knew was jazz. I remember the radio however and the bands from downtown — Wayne King, Guy Lombardo. My mother thought Eddie Howard's singing was out of this world. Of course they all swooned over Bing Crosby. However my mother didn't buy records. My aunt had the records and they were all Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Jimmy Lunceford and all the big jazz bands.

We moved again into a third floor flat over the DeShaziers and that is where it really began to happen; I was in about the eighth grade. My brother, my cousin and me, we slept on a couch in my mother's living room and below us was a booming Zenith Console in the DeShaziers flat. I could hear Jimmy Blanton walking. His walking sounded like dancing and all the little trinkets on my mother's "What-not" shelf would be dancing to the vibrations of the big Zenith. Our piano was in the same room and during the day I would try to pick out things on the piano . . . but nobody wanted to hear that. We rented most of the rooms in our apartment and the roomers would be annoyed and when I really thought I was into something the DeShaziers would bang on their ceiling beneath me with a broom handle. So I started out being very inhibited about practice and today that is still the case.

Finally I got a few killers together. Songs like *After hours*, *Black out*, *Blue flame*, *Boogie woogie on the St. Louis Blues* plus a special on Duke's *Carnegie blues*. These things started bringing me attention in high school. I was a member of the Accapella rather than the band in high school. We had a very good accapella. The band? Phooey! *Deep river* recorded on the "Big Soul Band" album was directly from my memories of the accapella. I sang bass. I started my formal music lessons about this time (second year





The Paul Bascomb Band, C & C Lounge, Chicago c. 1950-51: Norman Simmons (*piano*), Gus Chappell (*trombone*), Vernell Fournier (*drums*), Paul Bascomb (*tenor*), Pat Patrick (*baritone*), Malachai Favors (*bass*)

high). The accapella teacher used to try and get me to accompany the class but a thousand horses couldn't have gotten me up to play while all the kids were singing — plus having to read music. Nope, I wasn't ready. But of course before the teacher came into class I gave great jazz concerts.

I WROTE MY very first arrangement for one of the girls in the accapella. The arrangement was one which I had worked out on *Love letters* and I sold it to her. I would say my basic influences have been orchestral. It seemed a long time before I ever saw any of the bands in person though. Still we were having a lot of house parties ourselves by that time and the music we danced to was Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Illinois Jacquet, plus some big bands. Now that I think of it the small combos were making an impression on me. All the kids knew every note on the records. Everybody would be dancing and sometimes singing every note of *D.B. blues* like a big choir. My music teacher Mr. Max Sinzheimer never asked me if I had played before. He asked if I had studied and I said "no" and in the two and a half or three years I was under him he never knew. We worked out way up to the Bach Inventions. I never played my lesson by the music; I memorised the parts. My teacher loved to hear me play. He never played a note himself for what seemed to be the first six months. He used to say he wished we had two pianos and could play together. One day I came for my lesson and he had changed studios to one which did have two pianos. He suggested the first Bach Invention which I had done very well. I started and when he entered I thought there were a hundred pianos in the room. As if two parts of Bach's music were not enough complication it sounded like he was playing 60 other parts. I was washed out, I couldn't make it, I couldn't hear

through it and hold my own. I had never played with anyone else either and I never heard so much music in person in my life. Perhaps if he had prepared me I'd have done better but it was all too sudden. After all these years I figured out that my teacher must have been playing the first composition of Bach's Well Tempered Clavichord. Bach was a great improviser and all those inventions with the same numbers were related in chord structure or general structure. Mr. Sinzheimer left for a Chicago Music Conservatory position; he asked me to transfer but I felt that a full scale programme of history and all would be too much for me. By this time I was already sliding in proficiency and seeing the other side of the real teacher. I had graduated from high school and was working full time, plus dating, and the long hours of practice existed no more. I met Clifford Jordan right about this time. I had announced to my next teacher at the school my intentions to plazz jazz. He was a guitarist and everything he was trying to show me I had already figured out after Clifford Jordan had given me a book of chord symbols to study. I was still a dancer when I met Clifford. He had a gig at a community hall where we went dancing. I don't remember how I wound up on the stage but I guess his piano player didn't show up. Clifford liked my playing okay and gave me the book of chord symbols to take home. They were standard tunes like *Indiana* and so forth and of course a lot of the Bebop tunes were played from standard chord changes. I loved sports and dancing. When Johnny Griffin had the "Baby Band" in Chicago, I was dancing. Everybody in the Baby Band was as short or shorter than Johnny but all good players. All the best players from Chicago were out of DuSable High School where they had a great music band master who taught them reading and everything. Yes, *everybody* in Chicago music then who amounted to anything was



out of DuSable. I went to Phillips High — in the Accapella — yet . . . Eugene Wright had a large band out of DuSable called the Dukes of Swing. It was during World War II and the kids lined up at 7 p.m. to get into the Parkway Ballroom. The dance started at 8 p.m. and ended at 4 a.m. I had a mutilated draft card to show that I was 16 which I wasn't but I was in and danced every dance from the first to the last. I wasn't one of the people standing around the band stand watching the band play . . . I was waltzing those girls around the floor and squeezing them!

**W**ELL, EVENTUALLY I had my first trio — piano, bass, and guitar — and I sang some too. I used to get gigs because of the singing (nerve). Anyway the Nat King Cole Trio was the major influence for my trio and it was the sound of the whole which I heard although I did like Nat's piano playing a lot. Roland Faulkner, the guitarist in that trio, introduced me to Bird and Miles. Roland was 14 years old, a young whiz who was studying from violin books and thinking alto saxophone on guitar. Our first gig was cancelled because Roland was too young. I was too but I could get by because I looked older. An older saxophonist finally took charge of the whole trio and put us to work which involved my first ensemble writing. Roland and I played ensemble things but there is a distinct difference when a non-concert instrument is involved. I learned the importance of phrasing and the conception of the same when writing for the saxophonist. I would write out things and they would not sound like what I'd heard until they were phrased.

Gus Chappell, trombone and vibes, formed a group which included Roland and myself and now we had a quintet like George Shearing's. Gus was experienced enough to keep us from copying Shearing. Again, whatever influence there was came via the group sound although I liked George's playing and began using some of his technique — the block chord. Gus directed me toward reading music and his advice helped me to set standards that would be expected of a professional musician. Gus himself was an excellent musician. A big influence about that time was Erroll Garner. I heard that style when he and Wardell Gray made *Blue Lou*. Wow, I really dug that record! They really burned it up on there. Of course I knew that Erroll was a stylist and any approach at his technique was simply duplicating so I had to leave that alone — all the pianists have. It's a tremendous identity and it's all Erroll's.

Unequivocally I am influenced by Duke Ellington. I do not know the Duke personally so when I call his name it represents an institution which means the influence of his whole musical aura is upon me as an influence. Which is to include the works contributed by Billy Strayhorn, whom I had the pleasure of casually knowing, and the significant men who have transited through that band. Before I knew Duke's name — objectively, consciously that is — I remember first feeling the dancing like, walking rhythm of Jimmy Blanton and from that point on my amazement with that band has continually grown. My first approach to the piano was more influenced by Duke's band than by any piano player.

**I**F I AM ABLE to be objective about my own self analysis I would say that I am an intellectual. My attitude toward that statement is negative for an intellectual is a dirty word with me. However the instinctive part of it causes me to appreciate high standards and so my appreciation of Ellington has not been idealism and worship but because he has set and maintained a high level of productivity and musicality. This man has been so flexible with music for so long that I can't see how in my lifetime any other person in my field could have time enough to gain such seniority. And remember, Duke is still here producing. I could do a great number of pages here on his influence on me, for it is metaphysical as well as musical and intellectual. I might conclude by saying that as an arranging influence

he is almost alone among the music makers whose arrangements of certain songs I have felt was the way that song should sound and could hardly have been better. The rules which I have established for my own arranging are of his influence. The past 10 years or so have been arrangers day and a great deal of music and new facets and gimmicks have come through. Everything is in such abundance today that we suffer from a high level of mediocrity. Would you believe that one of the first pianists to affect me with impact was Ahmad Jamal. I had heard Erroll Garner but perhaps because he already was a sudden commercial style, immediately he went into that category with me; everybody was playing a chorus or two of Erroll. His *Penthouse serenade* was like *After hours* etc. You played it "just like it was on the record". I knew that Ahmad was distinct when I first heard him. It was his playing and all of Chicago knew it, long before he started the first trio. Very few instrumentalists have had that honour of being really successful locally. Ahmad did, before he ever recorded, because he had "it". Ahmad Jamal can play a lot of piano, a fact which is little known because the commercialising of his style stifled that, I think. Ahmad is one of the greatest influences of our musical day, perhaps a lot of people don't realise that either. There were pianists who influenced all the pianists and hornmen who influenced all the hornmen, but Ahmad, while being an influence on all the piano trios that became a rash at that time, likewise influenced Miles Davis who then in turn influenced the whole music world. His first really strong music group had the Jamal format influence. The vamps, the long tags, the mambo comp, Jamal was the first I heard do these things. Miles is an influence. There is something about his musicality that I really have a deep respect for.

Gil Evans is about the only other arranger who I think introduced really interesting new voicings to jazz. I think the sound was more or less directly derived from the classics but no less significant in the field of jazz. I think Stan Kenton was the father of true dissonance but I feel that his concept was driven to the outside by Duke Ellington. To me it sounded like it took a lot of extra effort for him to avoid sounding like Ellington who was already combining every possible interval usable, within controlled dynamics. When I am coaching singers I teach them that their own diction is essential to the construction of their vocal style. Likewise for my piano style — whatever it is, whatever distinction it has acquired, would have come from my efforts to find playing and physical comfort for small hands on the piano. One of the things I found at the time I played with Coleman Hawkins and Roy Eldridge the first time — when my physical thing was in good shape — was physical pleasure. I seek physical pleasure when I play the piano as well as musical satisfaction. So you might say I approach my technique like a sport. In practice I tone the muscles and in playing I test them. I have no doubts about my "soul of music". I am in fantasy land sometimes just listening to it.

The closest I have ever come to it was in composing for the Big Soul Band album. My intellect was already stocked and programmed and I could hear my voicing because the band was so similar to the C & C Orchestra. I was on the road with Dakota Staton and we were off for about five days in San Francisco. I had trouble turning my mind off. I could only sleep a few hours, needing cigarettes and drinks to slow up the flow of ideas (I am not a smoker or drinker by habit). I grew a cyst on my eye which I had to have operated on. I don't doubt the debts in me musically but the intellect and the physical are in need of my constant attention and scrutiny.

**O**SCAR PETERSON is responsible for opening the way to technical accomplishment in my case. From some incorrect playing with Claude McLin (standing at the piano) I grew a cyst on my wrist. When I first met Oscar it was my first gig after taking off the bandages. I had nothing to which I could refer for regaining what facility I previously had. I was



playing that gig with Flip Phillips and Bill Harris at the Old Blue Note in Chicago about 1951. Oscar and Ray Brown were just a duo then and I remember Oscar was singing some also.

In the few minutes between our sets, as I was leaving the stage and he was on the way up, Oscar stopped me and we sat at one of the tables. He said he liked my potential and wanted to show me a couple of exercises which would help my technique. He demonstrated about three table exercises. One sounded like a drummer playing paradiddles, rapidly and very distinct. One was a wrist rotation which he did so fast his fingers disappeared. These exercises turned my playing over for the next two years and I still find that approach essential today in my practice. By practicing on the table I am more directly concerned with the muscles and it relieves my inhibitions of making loud noises.

Oscar told me that no matter who I follow to the piano — him or anyone else — “for that moment *you* are the only piano player in the world”. I played better on the next set. He also told me not to develop favourite fingers while playing but to play on all of them and the weaker ones more.

Whenever I speak of piano players I begin by objectively leaving out Art Tatum — forget it! Phineas Newbown is a joy and an influence. He and the instrument are one. If the piano were not inanimate, there could never be anything wrong with Phineas. For my own personal pleasure I love to hear Hank Jones. He is my ultimate happy medium — reasonable, pianistic and yet distinctive.

I never really copied any pianist and usually that is a cycle we go through. But today nobody copies anybody anytime, nobody even uses the same repertoire. All hands come down on the piano originally and with original composition, so it is hard for me to credit the newer players because there are no standards. I hear a lot of good things and players who I think pianistically will be outstanding but the sounds of their music is so close to classical foundation and that is where I go for today's inspiration. The formal music composers have my respect. I will single out Herbie Hancock because he is a pianist/composer/bandleader and that's a very good position to be in to develop real distinction. His background with Miles and before is of course enhancing. There are others, I am sure, but the problem is as pre-stated: the whole musical level is up and many, many pianists are very, very good but it all adds up to a high level of mediocrity. I think because there is no message of the individual soul that no impact of distinction comes across. Everything is conglomerate. We've all found so much to be guilty for or political about that we don't know where we are individually. I am affected by today's music but much of the enjoyment is missing. Today perhaps we are not supposed to enjoy the music but relate, react, have a trip or something.

**T**HE SOCIETY of Chicago musicians was always warm, close and sociable. However I still did not hang out much. I did not get together with the pianists in town on a musical basis and seldom went out jamming. Composing and writing arrangements can keep one near the desk and the piano did not become the real principal until recently when general exposure has caused me to realise this to be so. However my playing has always been essential to my writing because it took me into musical environments and circumstances. I guess I took it all for granted, more or less. The jazz level of pianistics was not amazing to me until the point where I took notice of Ahmad Jamal. Also it was a long time before I had any collection of recordings and they started with orchestras and singers. Billy Wallace did impress me; he was fast, harmonic and extremely competitive.

Around 1952 or '53 I started at the Bee-Hive. I inherited the gig from Junior Mance. At the time I started Buddy Smith ( a left handed drummer) and Israel Crosby (bass) where in the rhythm section. My first gig was with Coleman Hawkins. This was my

second encounter with the Hawk. Sometime in 1950 or '51 after I had worked hard on the table exercises given to me by Oscar Peterson, I was recommended for a gig with Roy Eldridge and Coleman Hawkins by Erroll Garner. Erroll was playing the Chicago Theatre which was next door to the Capitol lounge where Roy and Hawk were opening. I was in the off night band two nights per week. Erroll told me to get the gig with Roy and Hawk because they needed a piano player. I did and this was a big step in my life. Hawk set new standards for me. He was fluid on any changes in any key and at any tempo. Playing fast was popular then and Hawk loved it. He would ask me if I knew a particular song that may have had tricky changes and I would proudly say “yes”. Then he would call the key and I'd choke. I knew everything in standard keys but this ended that. Then I'd ask how fast he wanted the tempo and he'd reply, “as fast as you can”. I said my prayers to Oscar and those finger exercises and called on all the spirits of my ear training and everything was beautiful. Now at the Bee-Hive it was back to work with Hawk again but not quite the same story. I had spent the passing few years mostly writing for the Paul Bascomb Band. When I am writing I tend to consider the other soloists more than myself, especially with the opportunity to write and learn writing for horns. Consequently my “chops” paid the dues. My mother came to see me at the Bee Hive with Hawk. She thought Hawk was killing me the way I was scrambling and groaning to catch those supersonic changes. I bled and I don't think my mom cared too much for that old man's taking advantage of her young son!

Sonny Stitt was very popular at the Bee-Hive. He really knew how to turn the Chicago people on and we enjoyed working with him. But my favourite character of all time is “The President” — Lester Young. Lester was all Lester, completely original in every way. Lester had his own language which only the “Pres-ites” could understand. Even today many of the musicians in New York love to tell and hear Lester Young stories. Lester coined many phrases from his original lingo. About the second or third time we played for Lester we had a new drummer who was much too much of a soloist while Pres was playing. After the first set Pres invited us to the basement where we hunt out at times. He took out a large package of rolled “joints” and stuck one in each of our mouths (it was my very first joint). As we lit up Pres spoke, “we haven't all played together before”, he said. “But on this next set we're going upstairs and play some music and everyone is going to get his chance to solo. I'll play the melody and then turn it over to “Lady Norman” and then to “Lady Victor” on the bass and when we get to the drum solo you can take an axe and chop those m. . . f. . . s up if you want to. But while Lester is playing just a little titi-boom on the cymbals!”. Lester called all short people midgets and so I was a midget, at least in relation to Victor Sproles who was nicknamed “Long”, I think by Johnny Griffin. Vic and I had a “Mutt and Jeff” thing going between us. One day Pres told him, “Victor, you know you mustn't f. . . with those midgets! Remember, the midgets and the lesbians rule the world! And when you get in a fight you can't hit them and they bite you on your knees and ankles.” A lot of Pres's phraseology and stories won't go to print so I won't stretch out his stories . . . he had so many. Pres would hum the tempo he wanted and he would call the tune by some pet name. Like “The Dirty Bitch” (*D.B. blues*) and say “I'm gone” and ease right into the microphone. I heard him sing just a few years before he died. He sang just like he played and it was the first time I realised how really close he and Billie Holiday were. He sang just like her and likewise played the way she sings or visa versa.

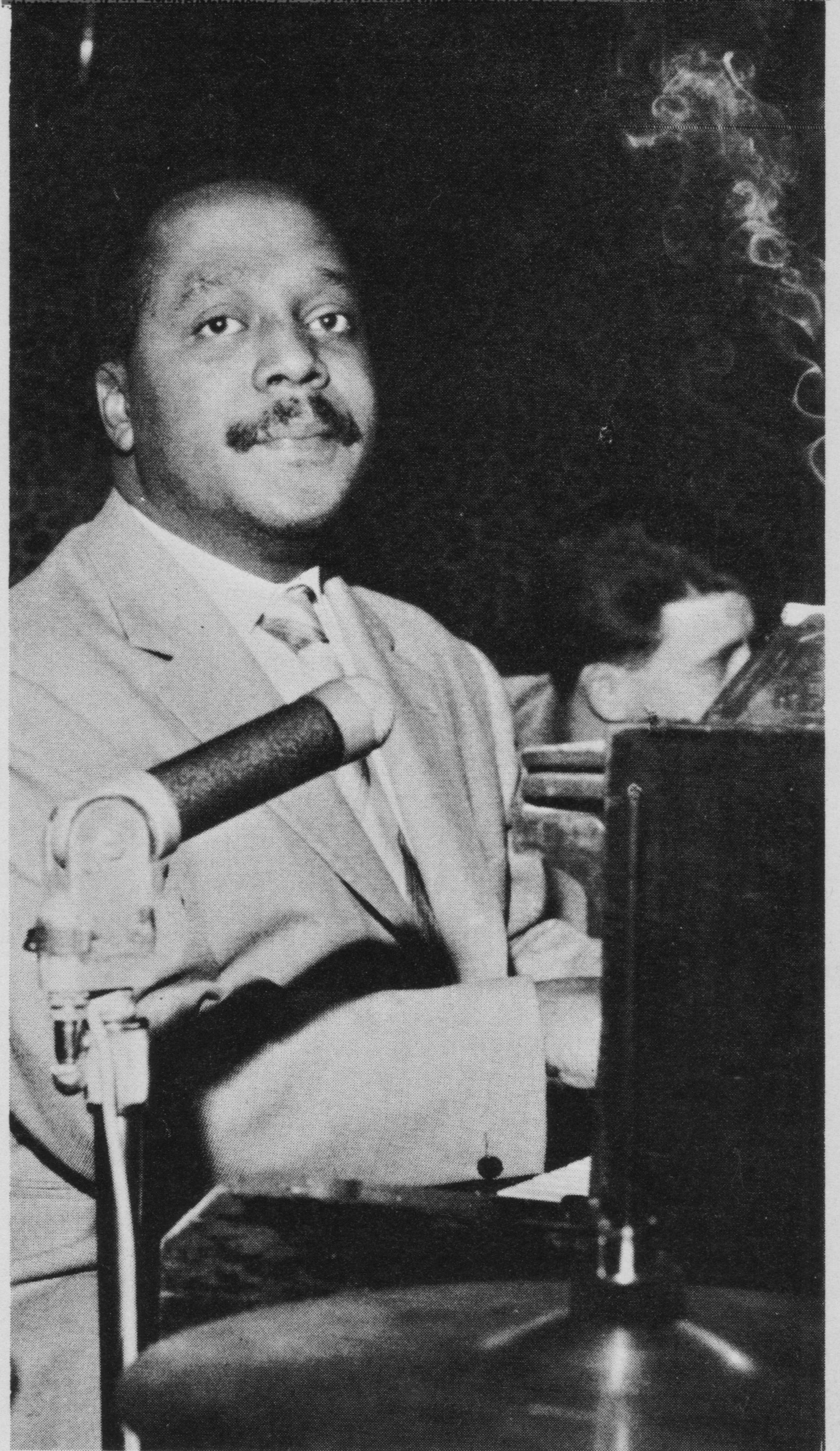
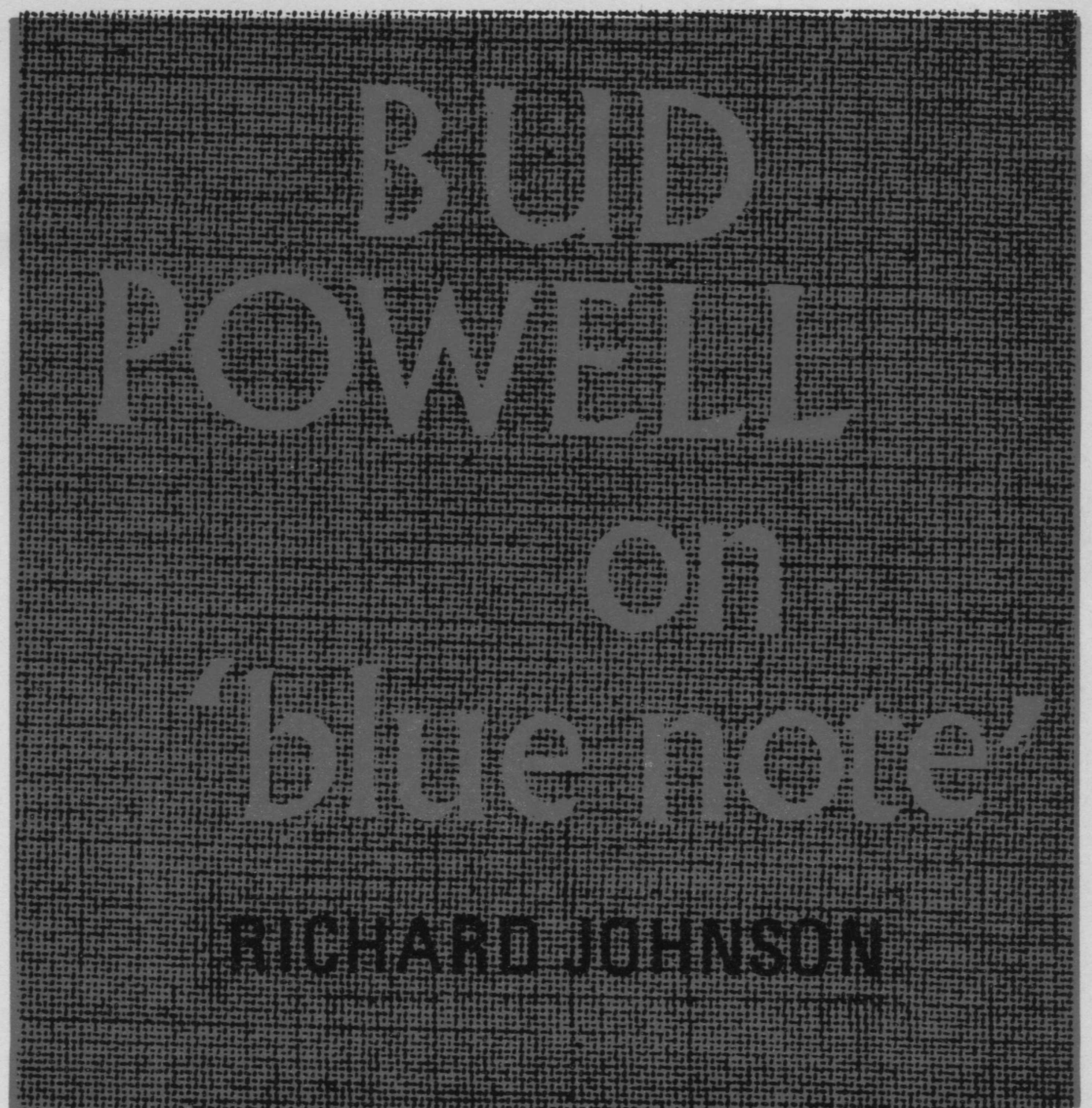
. . . more next month



**I**T WAS PREDICTABLY ironic that shortly after Bud Powell's death in 1966 those same critics who only a few years before had shown little interest in his post-'fifties work should suddenly discover a 'new' significance in these recordings. The lack of critical acclaim for Powell's output in the 'fifties reflected a reactionary attitude on the part of the majority of critics, who demanded Powell sound exactly as he did in the 'forties, and in doing so, failed to recognise the changing elements in his music as continuing proof of his creative potency. In the hope of drawing attention to the rich rewards to be derived from a study of Powell's 'fifties output I have collected together my impressions of his recorded work for Blue Note which spans some ten years and is represented by a five album set entitled "The amazing Bud Powell".

For the purpose of this essay I have decided to approach these recordings chronologically.

August 8, 1949 marked Bud Powell's recording debut for Blue Note and his leadership of a pick-up group comprising Fats Navarro, Tommy Potter, Roy Haynes and a nineteen year old tenorist Sonny Rollins. Four compositions, three of them by Powell, were recorded by the quintet which, with its gutty, driving approach, anticipated the "hard bop" movement of a few years later. As might be expected Rollins is somewhat over-shadowed by the talents of Navarro and Powell, although his brash, spiky solos communicate much enthusiasm and an overall sense of direction. The quick tempoed *Wail* contains several of the finest choruses Powell has committed to record, building to climaxes of tremendous urgency, achieved in part by Bud's rhythmic intensification of his left hand. *Bouncing with Bud*, taken at a medium tempo and containing fine, though hardly outstanding solos is interesting for several reasons, particularly for the way in which Powell complements the horns in the unison theme statement and his chording of a rather Monk-like bridge. Incidentally Bud recorded a superior version of his own composition with the Jazz Messengers at a Paris concert in late '59. Powell's third original, *Dance of the Infidels*, is a composition of ample melodic appeal plus a nice feeling of rhythmic suspension. Powell sustains the mood of the piece with an easy flowing solo before Navarro amplifies this mood with a series of long, elegant lines. The fourth and final performance is Monk's bop anthem *Fifty Second Street theme* which skims along at express velocity incorporating an impish dialogue between Powell and the horns in the theme statement. The choruses by Navarro and Powell are the very essence of bop at its most exciting and meaningful. On the afternoon of the same day Powell returned to the studio with just the rhythm section to record *Ornithology* and *You go to my head*. The two takes of the Charlie Parker tune are classic performances, creating a standard of improvisation which was both the inspiration and the envy of a host of younger pianists. Both takes are characterised by a lyrical warmth and while similar in mood they differ rewardingly in detail. The dancing double-time passages find Powell at the height of his powers, projecting a mood of zestful optimism which became a somewhat rarer commodity in his later work. The interpretation of *You got to my head* can, in my opinion, be ranked alongside Parker's best work in this idiom, for Bud like Bird possessed an intense sensitivity which imbued his work with a truly poetic quality. Powell's





approach here departs slightly from the one employed on earlier ballads such as *I should care* and *I'll keep loving you*, where a more flamboyant use was made of the keyboard's resources. Here the right hand traces out horn-like lines with the left hand stroking chordal compliments. Noteworthy are the extraordinary length of Powell's phrases, with each note having a precise plucked-like quality and also a coda of choppy dissonance caused by a tremolo device which could have been borrowed from Garner. Bud's liking for this contrasting type of coda can be heard on several other recordings, notably *Body and soul* and *April in Paris* both done in 1950 for Norman Granz.

**T**HE NEXT VISIT Powell made to the Blue Note studios was in May 1951, this time in the company of Max Roach and Curley Russell, members of the original Powell trio. Apart from the trio sides Powell recorded, in solo form, memorable versions of *Over the rainbow* and *It could happen to you*. The atmospheric *Night in Tunisia* with its provocative rhythmic character is a perfect springboard for the pianist's probing imagination and accordingly the two takes represent a major achievement in his career. There is an amazing concentration of creative thought to be found here, ranging from the colourful originality of the thematic voicings to the cadenzas and codas which are as audacious in concept as they are brilliant in execution. The thematic nature of Powell's improvisation is an indication of his respect for Gillespie's chart. Mention must be made of Max Roach who, with his inspired brushwork, shows an uncanny anticipation and sympathy for the pianist's inventions. In the light of Powell's composing up to this date, the appearance of *Un poco loco* was unexpected for it signalled the pianist's first composing venture into Latin-American territory, at a time when few jazz pianists were drawing real inspiration from this source. Within this chosen framework Powell expresses his personality lucidly while at the same time preserving the essential flavour of the idiom. As a composition *Un Poco Loco* is an unusual statement which even today remains something of a musical enigma. Basically it assumes the conventional AABA form, augmented with a four-bar introduction and a four-bar tag section to produce a superbly integrated forty-bar theme statement which sets the stage for Bud's stunning 'bolero'. Powell's dense block-chording in the 'A' sections of the theme statement emphasises the bold simplicity of his design while the 'B' section is looser and introduces an element of relaxation to balance the tension generated elsewhere. The repeated use of the corkscrew figure heard in the opening bars is ingenious, being essential to the composition structurally while also heightening its dramatic content. The three takes of this tune are presented in sequence and within the improvisations Bud can be heard pitting a Latin figure in the bass against the quicksilver flights of the right hand. As in *Night in Tunisia* a sense of balance is achieved by means of contrast-terse riffs suddenly overtaken by spiralling double-time outbursts – the whole propelled by the percussive insistence of Roach's drumming. These performances, along with the Verve piano solos recorded a few months earlier, reveal the scope and complexity of Powell's rhythmic conception. The influence of Powell's work in the Latin vein can be detected in the work of Hampton Hawes and Walter Bishop Jr but especially in the

composing and playing of Horace Silver on such pieces as *Ecaroh* and *Safari*. Powell's playing on *Over the rainbow*, while having its roots in Tatum's discoveries, is less florid and more rhythmically directed than his mentor's. The leaping fragmentation of the melody, complete with skillfully dovetailed runs displays Bud's highly developed sense of form. Here, as in the codas of *Tunisia* one is able to glimpse that element of fantasy which was an essential component of the Powell personality. Two takes of *It could happen to you* were recorded. The shorter first take was originally rejected in favour of the much improved second take. As on *Over the rainbow* Bud utilises the theme and variation approach, the more leisurely tempo allowing him to fashion some delicately shaped lines, offset with skipping runs and eccentric voicings. The inspirational level of Bud's *Parisian thoroughfare* is rather uneven, suggesting that it was a last minute decision to record the tune. Certainly the diffused ending would seem to confirm this. A more satisfactory version was recorded as a piano solo the same year.

**D**UE TO SEVERE personal problems Bud was absent from jazz between August '51 and the Spring of '53, when his first public appearance was at the Massey Hall with the 'Quintet of the Year'. August 14 of that year saw Bud's return to the Blue Note studios accompanied by Art Taylor and George Duvivier. It would seem that the main reason for holding this session was to record Bud's formidable new composition *Glass enclosure*. The format of the piece, which comprises four contrasting movements, is immediately striking, as is its mood of majestic solemnity. This work is also interesting in that it indicates Powell's respect for, and assimilation of certain aspects of classical music and also the merits of well rehearsed, totally written works. The density and soul of *Glass enclosure* are, I feel, monumental to Powell's unique contribution. The mood and textures of this piece appear to be a culmination of an approach that Powell had been exploring since his return. Both *Embraceable you* and *Sure thing*, both from the Massey Hall concert, encompass this same area of expression. *Autumn in New York* finds Powell playing in a contrasting manner to his *It could happen to you* solo. Here Bud creates a whirlpool of sound, releasing the melody in a flood of emotion, with Duvivier's fluttering bass figure complementing the pianist's fluid meditations. There is little departure from the theme in a performance which evokes the mellowness of *Autumn*. *Polka dots and moonbeams* is cast in a similar mould with Powell's sombre chordal exposition remaining defiantly in the shadow of the tune. The fugal *Sure thing* is an absorbing workout emphasising the rapport between Powell and Duvivier.

*Reets and I*, a bright boppish line by trumpeter Benny Harris, has Bud improvising throughout in a solo which, though hardly outstanding by Powell standards, is notable for sudden lyrical flurries of notes. *I want to be happy* heralds the fastest tempo of the set and a Powell solo which adequately complements the composer's wish. Art Taylor's work here, as on the other swifter titles, tends to be rather heavy handed, somewhat removed from those attributes of lift and articulation which distinguished his later work with Powell. On *Collard Greens and Black-eyed Peas*



better known as Oscar Pettiford's *Blues in the closet*, Powell immediately establishes a personal identity with some expressive chording and the use of contrasting link phrases between the main melodic motifs of the theme. George Duvivier, with his supple lines and melodic flair, makes his presence felt here as elsewhere on these recordings. It is perhaps surprising to realise that *Blues in the closet*, was the first time that Bud had cared to record a blues in trio form. *Audrey*, of casual lilt and appealing proportions, is an original twelve bar by Powell and, in common with all these selections, leaves the listener with an impression of completeness. In general terms it is noticeable that some of the dynamic energy that characterised *Tunisia* and *Poco* has given way to more subdued qualities. Also in evidence is a more liberal group policy than was previously the case, with the introduction of bass solos, pre-meditated unison passages for bass and piano, and bar trading between drums and piano.

**D**URING THE next few years Powell recorded extensively for Verve, renewing his association with Blue Note in August '57, when he recorded enough material for volume 3 of the series. The trio, with Paul Chambers and Art Taylor, is heard throughout side 1 with Curtis Fuller augmenting the trio on the second side. The lean, articulate and finely poised *Some soul* is an extended improvisation on the traditional structure of the blues. Powell's frequent fluctuations between the basic tempo and double time adds considerable rhythmic mobility to a performance which, in mood, is reminiscent of *Willow weep for me*. The opening phrases however are a throwback to Bird's classic *Parker's mood* solo. Powell's reluctance, here as elsewhere on the session, to assume the subordinate role during the bass solos results in a series of Powell-Chambers duets. Happily though, these outcomes provide some of the most stimulating moments of music making of the entire session. Powell's persuasive work behind bass solos achieved real prominence on the Victor recordings of 1956-7, where on *Coscrane* for example he underpinned Duvivier's solo with huge blocks of sound with dramatic results.

The aptly titled *Blue Pearl*, is based on the harmonies of *You'd be so nice to come home to*, is a nostalgic sixteen bar line which Powell repeats before commencing his solo. Played at a medium tempo, the rather precarious optimism of the improvisation is heightened by isolated and ominous punctuations in the bass. Utilising the chords of *Lover come back to me*, a sequence much favoured by Powell, *Frantic Frances* taken at a fast clip, has Bud throwing off a series of long single-note lines climaxed by a short soaring passage in octaves. A bowed bass solo and a refreshing set of exchanges with Art Taylor's brushes terminate the performance.

I have already mentioned Bud's sympathy for certain aspects of classical music so it does not come as a great surprise to find the inclusion of a piece entitled *Bud on Bach*. Powell has conceived the piece in the form of two distinct, yet completely complementary movements; the first, his reading of 'Solfeggietto': the second a spontaneous and cogent commentary on Bach's invention, which I am sure would have pleased Bach himself. While the rapid first movement is a sparkling demonstration of Bud's dexterity the performance as a whole draws attention to the variety of tonal beauty he is able to extract from the keyboard. The trio return with a loping medium tempo blues entitled *Keepin' in the groove* to close the first side. The quartet side is particularly welcome presenting the listener with an opportunity of hearing Powell in the company of another horn for the first time, at least on record, since the Massey Hall concert. Powell's role as an accompanist is

seldom mentioned, although Wynton Kelly, in a *Down Beat* interview some years ago, cited his early appreciation of Bud's comping. Exposure to Bud's comping behind Sonny Stitt on *Bud's blues*, a Prestige recording of 1950 should leave the reader in no doubt as to the validity of Kelly's sentiments. Of the three tunes performed by the quartet *Don't blame me* offers the finest example of this aspect of Powell's playing; his full yet sympathetic support redeeming a performance marred by Fuller's uncertain intonation and rather uneasy phrasing at a difficult tempo. Powell's solo is a thoughtful offering containing a rich passage in block chords. On *Idaho* Bud indulges in some happy sounding stride piano; a contrast to the tearaway stride of the 1950 *Sweet Georgia Brown* recording. The Charlie Parker tune *Moose the mooche* fails to capture the excitement of bop's best days but is nevertheless an enjoyable affair. At odd instances during these performances (trio and quartet) a slight hesitancy can be sensed in Powell's playing. While having little effect on the overall strength of the music, these moments are a fleeting reminder of the artistic recovery made by Powell after the Verve sessions of December '54 and January '55 where his extremely erratic playing seemed, at the time, a disturbing omen for the future. As a collective enterprise these '57 performances achieve a slightly lower level of inspiration than those produced by the '53 session, yet because they embody those elements of constant search and frequent enlightened discovery they remain vital examples of Powell's art.

**A**LMOST EXACTLY a year after these recordings Powell was back, at the request of Alfred Lion to record a programme composed entirely of his own material. The occasion was an auspicious one with Philly Joe Jones and Sam Jones on hand to coax a really creative response from the pianist. From recorded evidence, the months between the Autumn of '56 and the Spring of '59 were, in terms of Powell's composing, his most prolific period since the late 'forties. In five consecutive recording sessions (two for R.C.A. Victor and three for Blue Note) during that period over thirty of the tunes performed were Powell originals. After hearing the '58 session it is clear that Powell's playing had undergone a number of 'temporary' modifications. I use the word 'temporary' to indicate that Powell's playing rarely remained static long enough to correspond to a neat critical theory concerning his stylistic development. His whole conception was liable to change almost overnight. A ballad at any one time could be a flowing, rhapsodic affair or perhaps be treated with the same austerity as was *Polka dots and moonbeams*. In fact a new recording was more likely to contradict than confirm an apparent trend in Powell's music. The temporary modifications previously referred to are primarily concerned with Powell's touch, which is heavier and more percussive than was the case on the '57 session, and also the more emphatic role played by his left hand. Noticeable too is the absence of those rippling double-time passages which were once a focal point of many Powell performances. The general air of economy seems to convey an attitude of mature deliberation on Powell's part.

The structure of the improvisation on *Monopoly* is interesting for Powell's use of a stride device in the first eight bars of the second chorus as a rhythmic stimulant and the use of brilliantly oblique runs into the bridge sections of the first and second choruses. In the latter part of the improvisation Bud's bouncing resolution of his favourite *Toy trumpet* quote is a most exhilarating moment. Typical of Powell's restless spirit was his introduction of a freshly conceived bridge passage for the outgoing theme statement. The piece is characterised by a sense of turbulent involvement. *John's Abbey* is a wonderfully compact piece of writing with a middle section which provides a perfect climax to the preceding sixteen bars. The performance as a whole is one of Bud's most satisfying particularly from a rhythmic standpoint where, at the fast tempo,



he creates a compelling state of tension by relentlessly punctuating the running line of his right hand with his left. The gritty brushwork of Philly Joe Jones is again a vital element in producing an atmosphere of bristling spontaneity. In fact this album as a whole remains perhaps the definitive example of Philly Joe's brushwork. *Dry soul* has, by virtue of doubling up the tempo, the same rhythmic flexibility as the earlier *Some soul*. However the denser structure of this blues performance give the impression that it would have sounded equally impressive played at the organ. Powell's approach is predominantly two-handed, making liberal use of space and dissonance. After hauling the piece back to the slower tempo shortly before the bass solo he embarks on a locked-hand passage stretching a curling melodic idea through the lower reaches of the keyboard, which brings to mind a similar dramatic moment on *Now's the time* from the 1956 'Blues by Bud' LP on Verve. There are two takes of *Sub city*, the shorter take dispensing with the bass and drum solos featured by the other. The composition, boosted by a minor pedal chord falling every bar moves with the effortless momentum of a giant pendulum. Towards the end of his improvisation on the shorter take Powell adopts a freer attitude towards his material by leaning back and applying sound to the moving rhythmic backcloth in much the same way as an action painter might apply colour to a canvas.

Bud, in common with Monk, was able to take considerable rhythmic liberties without impeding the forward movement of a performance and in the light of the deep musical sympathies which extended between the two men it seems inevitable that Powell should have been one of the most inspired interpreters of Monk's music. During the haunting mood piece *Time waits* one is again reminded of Monk and such works as *Ruby my dear* and *Monk's mood*. In his improvisation Powell seems more concerned with developing the textural qualities of the piece than producing a set of linear variations. An unusual sonority imparts the piece with an air of melancholy. On *Buster rides again*, Philly Joe's incisive support again brings out the more aggressive elements in Powell's playing. Of Latin-American persuasion, the performance is a kind of poly-rhythmic fantasy, with all the diverse rhythmic elements, jarring chords and squeeling runs becoming a cohesive whole through the intuitive rapport of the three participants. Philly Joe's work here is an absorbing study in itself. The boppish *Marmalade*, with its overtones of cynical humour completes the session.

**T**HE EXACT recording date of the fifth and final volume of this Blue Note series seems in some doubt. However it seems reasonable to accept January '59 as listed in Jepsen's Powell discography. The trio on this occasion was completed by Art Taylor and Paul Chambers. It is noticeable that with the return of these two musicians there is a re-emphasis of the legato qualities in Powell's playing; whereas his work on the previous volume tended to be more staccato. Perhaps Powell's reaction to the different musical personalities of Philly Joe and Art Taylor is a partial explanation of these differences. In common with the previous volume Powell composed all the selections for this recording; a fact which should prompt the listener to consider Powell's important contribution to the Library of Modern Jazz composition. As a composition *Cleopatra's dream* is an expressive evocation of a dream-like atmosphere; tinged with elements which are both wistful and exotic. These atmospheric, rather mysterious qualities have a hypnotic appeal which can be traced right back to such pieces as *Hallucinations* and *Dusk in Sandi*. In the course of his extended improvisation Powell utilises several different approaches — characteristic single-note lines, octave unisons and block chordal passages — all of which increase the expressive scope of the perfor-

mance. These different approaches are fused together in such a way that the mood established in the theme is sustained throughout, giving the piece a marvellous sense of compositional unity. As Leonard Feather has noted, a curious aspect of this fifth volume is the emphasis on minor keyed compositions. *Duid Deed*, played at a perfect medium tempo, is also cast in a minor key and structured on the familiar thirty-two bar form. The immediate melodic appeal of the piece, with its sinewy and uncluttered funkiness, is reminiscent of some of Horace Silver's writing in this genre. Particularly engaging are the 'A' sections of Powell's third chorus where Paul Chambers shifts the rhythmic emphasis to the first and third beats of the bar. The improvisation is beautifully resolved in the last four bars of the fourth chorus with a sequence of notes which anticipate perfectly the re-statement of the theme. I have long regarded this as one of Powell's most moving and authoritative performances.

The flat-footed simplicity of *Danceland* reminds one that Powell shared with such as Monk and Rollins a rather wry sense of humour. The opening bars of the improvisation sound like a satirical nod in the direction of 'Soulville', while the first half of the third chorus displays Powell's acute sense of rhythmic displacement. *Boderick*, dedicated by the pianist to his young son John, then three years of age, has a deliberate child-like innocence and could be described as a jazz lullaby. *Gettin' there* is taken at a similar tempo to *Duid Deed*, somewhere in the region of forty bars per minute. The piece is a close relation of *Buster rides again*, but with the rhythm section playing in straight 4/4 throughout. The opening chorus has Powell developing a simple melodic idea with song-like spontaneity, and it is the careful balancing of these melodic elements which give this performance its clarity and strong sense of form. Perhaps the most interesting piece performed was *Comin' up*, a further excursion into Latin-American territory. The piece is based on a two-bar pattern, which in its simplest form comprises a six note drum motif answered by a three note bass figure. This pattern, with variations, is repeated throughout by bass and drums. The rhythmic tension is heightened by Art Taylor's high-hat falling on the 'On' as opposed to the customary 'off' beats in the bar. The extended performance is a chanting, patchwork quilt of emotions and it is fascinating to study the way in which Powell dovetails his phrasing with the prevailing rhythmic backdrop. Not only does he carve out bold and coherent melodic shapes, but there is never a sense of rhythmic confusion within the trio. Again one is aware of the fertility of Powell's rhythmic imagination. Both *Down with it* and *The scene changes* are taken at a fast clip of around sixty-eight bars per minute, and project an exuberance and vitality which infuse all the performances on this record. In terms of relaxation and rapport *The scene changes* compares favourably with any Powell trio performance on record. On this particular title there are echoes in Powell's playing of such earlier influences as Billy Kyle and Teddy Wilson, especially in the execution of the quaver-orientated passages. In terms of tempo the most challenging composition under taken by Powell was *Crossin' the Channel*, which is taken at nearly eighty bars per minute, somewhat faster than the 1947 version of *Bud's bubble*, and slightly slower than the classic *Indiana* from the same session. Although on this performance there are a couple of instances where phrases are not quite perfectly articulated; these minute flaws are negligible in the light of the performance's many virtues. Worthy of mention are Powell's ferocious attack and some startling new ideas during the octave passages. Above all it is a joy to hear Powell in full flight, and it is somehow fitting that this fifth volume should conclude the series with the same passionate beauty as was engendered by the first volume. Few musicians poured as much of themselves into their art as Bud Powell and I hope that in the course of this essay I have conveyed the significance of these five volumes as representing one of the major individual contributions in the field of Modern Jazz.



## 1) Current Releases

### CANNONBALL ADDERLEY

NARDIS:

Blue Mitchell (tpt); Cannonball Adderley (alt); Bill Evans (p); Sam Jones (bs); Philly Joe Jones (d)

New York City — July 1, 1958

*Minority :: Straight life :: Blue funk :: A little taste :: People will say we're in love :: Nardis*

Riverside 2360 001 (42/6d.)

"AS FAR AS I know, and much to my surprise, this album has not been issued here before". Thus writes S. Voce Esq., in the September *Jazz Journal*. Well my old mate, Fontana first put it out here in 1963 and I reviewed it in the November, 1963, *Gramophone*. It was called "Portrait of Cannonball" in those days but it still sounds like a pretty good bebop (as opposed to hard bop) session. This was, in fact, Cannonball's first album for Riverside and was made at a time when he was with the Miles Davis Sextet. Bill Evans was also with Davis at the time and Philly Joe had only just left the group; Miles himself wrote *Nardis* for the session although he has never actually recorded the tune himself. Adderley roars through his solos without apparently breathing (his choruses on the Gigi Gryce tune *Minority* sound like a continuous statement). The power of his work in the lower register is well demonstrated on the ballad *Straight life* and the rhythm section is, of course, superb. Blue Mitchell has the crackling vitality usually associated with trumpeters who have worked with Tadd Dameron-led bands and the LP consists of thirty-eight minutes of what I like to think is jazz.

ALUN MORGAN

### KENNY BURRELL

ASPHALT CANYON SUITE:

Kenny Burrell (g) with unidentified brass section, p, bs and d. Johnny Pate (arr)

New York City — c. Autumn 1969

*Part One (Introduction, Asphalt Canyon blues) :: Part Two (Think about it, Better get your thing together, Alone in the city) :: Things ain't what they used to be :: Put a little love in your heart :: Please send me someone to love :: Going to Jim and Andy's :: Sugar hill-1*

-1 Omit brass section

Verve SVLP9250 (39/11d.)

KENNY BURRELL'S albums for Verve have been consistently excellent. Admittedly "Guitar Forms" has remained a peak achievement but you can't have Gil Evans's services for every LP even if your name is Miles Davis. Burrell's music has grace, beauty, form and an unquestioned attachment to the blues. The first side of this new LP comprises Kenny's *Asphalt Canyon Suite*, another jazz work inspired by the life and sounds of the city. The moods range from reflective, atmospheric music which positively shimmers (*Think about it* and *Alone in the city*) to harder and more aggressive sections such as *Better get your thing together*. Johnny Pate, who seems to be the "in" arranger at Verve these days, has provided some suitable if not too imaginative backings for a very professional brass team. The main thing is that Pate's writing never really gets in the way and on the slower tempos does at least provide Burrell and his trio with some beautiful cushioning effects. Side two has the same instrumentation but uses unrelated material. Burrell himself wrote *Andy's* and *Sugar Hill*; the former is a blues with a fashionable rock beat while the latter is probably the best showcase on the LP for Burrell the improvising jazz soloist. The main eight-bar phrase of this 32 bar chorus tune has strong modal connexions but the middle-eight is a little out of keeping for it has a chord progression which sounds almost banal. It is possible that *Sugar Hill* is from an entirely different session; The brass section is absent, the bass player is more prominently recorded and does not sound like the man who plays on the other tracks. The drummer is almost certainly a different musician, achieving a tight, clipped sound and accenting the fourth beat in the Philly Joe Jones manner. Steve Voce lists Roland Hanna as the pianist for the album and I am sure he is right for the majority of tracks. I would suggest, however, that on *Sugar Hill* it

## RECORD REVIEWS

may well be Richard Wyands, with possibly Jimmy Cobb on drums. Unfortunately Verve have seen fit to throw this album onto the market with no personnel details and a statement on the back of the sleeve which contravenes the Trades Descriptions Act 1968. "File Under Popular, Male Vocal" proclaims a note at the top right-hand corner. Throughout the course of the forty minutes no popular male sings a note.

ALUN MORGAN

### GRAHAM COLLIER

SONGS FOR MY FATHER:

Harry Beckett (tpt, fl-h); Derek Wadsworth (tbn-1); Alan Wakeman (ten, sop); Tony Roberts, Alan Skidmore (ten-2); Bob Sydor (ten, alt); John Taylor (p); Philip Lee (g-3); Graham Collier (bs); Chick Webb (d)

London — 1970

*Song one (seven-four)-1,2,3 :: Song two (ballad)-1 :: Song three (nine-eight blues)-1 :: Song four (waltz in four-four) :: Song five (rubato)-2 :: Song six (dirge) :: Song seven (four-four figured)-1,2,3*

Fontana 6309 006 (39/11d.)

THE MEN Collier now has working with him, unlike his earlier personnel, are all of the post-Coltrane persuasion, broadly speaking, and his problem in writing this set of related pieces was to devise a musical edifice which could stand up on its own terms yet was still sufficiently capacious to allow his sidemen a reasonable degree of improvisational freedom. In my view he has tended to place too much stress on the latter requirement in this collection, and though what we have of his writing here shows an intelligent sense of structure, with melodic cross-references from one item to another helping to infuse the work with an agreeable sense of unity, and the attractive voicings adding an extra dimension of interest, the improvised portions rather swamp the scored parts. As a result of this the album tends to stand or fall on the quality of the solos. Collier speaks enthusiastically of Beckett's brass playing in his concise sleeve note, and whilst it is true that a melodic flair beyond the average is discernible in his work, it must also be pointed out that his debt to Davis and Tolliver is clear and that his technique, at least in terms of tonal scope and manoeuvrability at the top of the range, is limited. *Song one*, however, makes it plain how superior he is to Lee, who is also featured in this item. (A curious point about this opening number is that the last solo sounds very much as though it is played on soprano, though the otherwise helpful sleeve attributes it to Skidmore on tenor saxophone.) Of the other soloists, I liked Wadsworth best; his trombone work in *Song three* shows an original mind and his musicality comes across despite the distraction of over-energetic piano chording. Of the reedmen, Roberts evinces in his short stint in *Song five* a less derivative turn of mind than Wakeman, Sydor or Skidmore, who are all probably superior to him on technical grounds but seem even more obsessed with Coltrane than the trombonists of the 'fifties were with Jay Jay Johnson. Taylor, as already implied, tends to upset the musical balance when working behind other soloists, but contributes inventive if somewhat cold improvisations to the third, sixth and seventh pieces. The record plays for a generous 43 minutes and whilst of mixed quality should be heard as an intelligent approach to the problem of enclosing currently fashionable solo styles within musically cohesive structures. Collier's past record, however, suggests that he



will make better albums than this, and on the next occasion it is to be hoped that he will be less modest about his own talents, both as writer and instrumentalist. Few other leaders, one imagines, would allow their names to be omitted from the list of personnel!

MICHAEL JAMES

## KENNY COX

### MULTIDIRECTION:

Charles Moore (tpt); Leon Henderson (ten); Kenny Cox (p); Ron Brooks (bs); Danny Spencer (d)

Detroit — November 26, 1969

*Spellbound :: Snuck in :: Sojourn :: Multidirection :: What other one :: Gravity point*

Blue Note BST84339 (47/6d.)

I HAVE NOT HAD an opportunity of hearing the first LP by Kenny Cox and the Contemporary Jazz Quintet (Blue Note BST84302) but on the strength of "Multidirection" I think I might enjoy it. This group of young men from Detroit offer a style of jazz which recognizes the need to retain the elements I grew up with. Their music swings, makes use of material which is eminently suited to the performers in terms of form and is played in a very professional way, by which I mean that the ensemble statements are clean and the soloists in tune. At the moment, and inevitably I suppose, the group lacks an immediately identifiable style. Moore is heavily influenced by Miles Davis, Leon Henderson (brother of tenor saxist Joe) uses the fashionable scooped-out tone and Moore's tunes — *Snuck in*, *Gravity* and the title number — lack the originality of the three by Cox. But Cox himself is an excellent quintet leader, a most intelligent soloist and a writer of promise. It is possible that Blue Note have another Horace Silver on their hands (and by that I do not mean to infer that the band sounds like Silver's only that both Kenny and Horace are strong soloists and composers). I hope Cox will be rewarded with a long-term contract by Blue Note for I feel sure these thirty-eight minutes will prove to be a prelude to even better things in the future.

ALUN MORGAN

## LIGHTNIN' SAM HOPKINS

### LIGHTNIN'! — VOLUME 2:

Sam "Lightnin'" Hopkins (vcl, g); Francis Clay (d, except on -1). No vcl (incidental speech only)-2

Berkeley, Califor — 1969

*Mojo hand — part 1 :: Mojo hand — part 2-1 :: Have you ever had a woman :: Ain't it crazy-1 :: Black and evil :: Hello Central-1 :: Back door friend-2 :: Little girl, little girl :: It's better down the road*

add unknown hca, p; bs

same date

*Rock me baby*

Poppy PYS 11002 (39/11d.)

AFTER MY closing remark in my review of Volume 1 (JM, July) I in fact find myself with Volume 2 as well (Those seeking Mr. Russell's opinion must consult a certain rival magazine). This set is very much the mixture as before, but more patchy. *Mojo* has become almost stereotyped and including two versions here is pushing it a bit. The stilted group does nothing for *Rock me* and perhaps it's as well they're anonymous. Lightnin', however, manages to extract something new out of *Crazy* (still great fun, this piece) and the reworking of *Central* shows something of his greatness. As always he plays just too much guitar, although the solo *Back door* doesn't really get anywhere. Of the rest *Have you*, *Black and evil* and *Little girl* are standard Hopkins slow blues and *Better* is a faster blues. Clay's drumming becomes almost ambitious for a blues drummer at times (listen to him on *Mojo* — he certainly livens this number up). A warm, informal session; it all depends how much you like your Hopkins.

BOB YATES

## MILT JACKSON

### THAT'S THE WAY IT IS:

Milt Jackson (vib); Monty Alexander (p); Ray Brown (bs); Dick Berk (d)

Shelly's Manne-hole, Hollywood — August 1 and 2, 1969

*Here's that rainy day :: Tenderly*

add Teddy Edwards (ten)

same date

*Frankie and Johnny :: Wheelin' and dealin' :: Blues in the bassment :: That's the way it is*

Impulse SIPL523 (39/11d.)

ON THE FACE of it this would seem to have

had all the makings of a productive session with three stalwarts of the bop era united again to recreate past glories, but such, alas, did not prove to be the case. The main reason for this was without doubt the inclusion of newcomer Monty Alexander, whose steamroller soul piano routines, given ample scope by the choice of no less than four blues numbers, served to inhibit any tendency to creative thinking on the part of his colleagues. Brown, especially in his unaccompanied passage in *Tenderly*, is relatively unaffected, but Jackson and Edwards, though striving to salvage what they can from this wreck of a session, find it uphill work with Alexander's blatantly four-square piano figures ringing out behind them. The tenor saxophone solo in the title track is a good case in point, with Edwards introducing cleverly diversified melodic shapes to instigate an after-hours atmosphere, only to cry off all too soon as the pianist peremptorily marshals him back on to the musical straight-and-narrow. It might be added that Berk's chopping beat does not help matters very much.

As for Jackson himself, it would appear that he has all but lost the facility to spin out those long, fluid, and impeccably timed phrases that made his work a joy to hear back in the 'fifties. *Rainy day*, a much over-played tune, is his feature here and finds him opening in a tentative manner and never really achieving that lyrical intensity he once seemed to be able to reach on any given occasion. The record plays for rather more than 43 minutes; the audience, as vociferous as they were undiscerning, loved every one of them.

MICHAEL JAMES

## ELMORE JAMES

### THE LEGEND OF ELMORE JAMES:

ELMORE JAMES (vcl, g); J.T. Brown (ten); Johnny Jones (p); Odie Payne (d)

Chicago — 1952 or early 1953

MR5001 *I believe*

MR5002 *Sinful woman*

MR5003 *I held my baby last night*

ELMORE JAMES AND HIS BROOMDUSTERS: Elmore James (vcl, g); unknown sax; Ike Turner (p); unknown bs; d

Canton, Miss. — 1953 or 1954

FL161 *Hand in hand*

*Please find my baby* (unissued take)

Elmore James (vcl, g); unknown saxes; probably Johnny Jones (p); unknown bs; probably Odie Payne (d)

probably Chicago — c. 1955

FL183 *1839 blues*

Elmore James (vcl, g); unknown alt; ten; probably Johnny Jones (p); unknown bs; probably Odie Payne (d)

probably similar location and date

*So mean to me*

add unknown bar and g

probably similar location and date

*Where can my baby be*

Elmore James (vcl, g); probably Boyd Atkins (alt); J.T. Brown (ten); Johnny Jones (p); unknown bs, probably Odie Payne (d) No vcl-1

Chicago — April 1, 1956

*Wild about you* (unissued take)

*Canton, Mississippi breakdown-1*

*Long tall woman* (unissued take, presumably take 1)

Elmore James (vcl, g); unknown sax; p; bs; d

possibly Culver City — 1956

FL201 *Rock my baby right*

Note: Sleeve gives personnel for Culver City session as: James Parr (tpt); Maxwell Davis (ten); Jewel Grant (bar); Willard McDaniel (p); Chuck Hamilton (bs); Jesse Sables (d); Only one sax is faintly audible, however.

United Artists UAS29109 (39/11d.)



## TO KNOW A MAN, VOLUMES 1 and 2:

Elmore James (vcl, g); ?Bushy Head (p); unknown bs; d. No vcl-1  
New York — c. 1961-2

*Tape announcement/Hand in hand (take 1)/Tape announcement and band tuning/I have a right to love my baby/Hand in hand (take 2, last verse only) :: Tape announcement/Hand in hand (take 3) :: Hand in hand (take 4): Every day I have the blues :: Tape announcement and speech/Dust my broom :: Tape announcement/It hurts me too (take 1) :: Tape announcement/Talk to me baby (take 1, including false start)/Tape announcement/Can't stop loving my baby :: Tape announcement/Got to move :: Tape announcement/Manhattan slide-1 :: Speech and tape announcement/Twelve year old boy :: Tape announcement/Elmore jumps one (1st false start)/Elmore jumps on (2nd false start)/Elmore jumps one (take 1)-1 :: Tape announcement/I believe (take 1)/Speech and announcement/I gotta go now :: Tape announcement/Make my dreams come true (false start)/Make my dreams come true (take 3)*

The above musicians in discussion, with incidental instrumental accompaniment, and ?Bobby Robinson singing a snatch of *Black snake blues*

same session

*Back in Mississippi*

?Bushy Head (vcl, p); Elmore James (g); unknown bs; d.  
same session

*Tape announcement/Second fiddle man*

Elmore James (vcl, g); ?Bushy Head (p); unknown bs; d.  
New York — c. 1961-2 (different session from above)

*Tape announcement/Mean mistreatin' mama (take 1, incomplete)/Mean mistreatin' mama (take 2); Mean mistreatin' mama (take 3); Tape announcement/Sunnyland (take 1)*

?Bushy Head (vcl, p); Elmore James (g); unknown bs; d. Vcl and p only -2

same session

*Footrace to a resting place/Tape announcement/Wrong doing woman-2*

**Blue Horizon 7-66230 (49/11d.) (2 LP set)**

IT WAS always evident that residing in the vaults of the many small (and some not-so-small) blues records companies that mushroomed after the war there must be a wealth of unissued material by artists major, minor and unknown. Until recently it was by no means certain whether any of it would be issued (if indeed it could be found). In the jazz field Parker has been well covered, but not really anybody else; a look at blues shows that Chris Strachwitz gave us unissued Hopkins Gold Star material and Guitar Slim and Jelly Belly from MGM, and things have been developing slowly since then. Notably recent developments have been Cobra material on Blue Horizon, and the very interesting Chess re-issues. We've already had Elmore James sides disinterred from the vaults of Modern and Chess on Blue Horizon 7-63204 — dare I mention it? — and now these two sets add to the growing James discography. Six tracks of the UA LP were on Meteor and Flair 78s; the remaining six comprise three alternate takes and three previously unknown titles from Flair sessions. Of the Blue Horizon set only four have been issued: *Mean mistreatin' mama* take 3 on Enjoy 2020/Sue WI4007; *It hurts me too* (Enjoy 2015 and LP); *Every day I have the blues* (Enjoy 2027); and an edited version of *Manhattan slide* as *Pickin' the blues* on Enjoy 2015 and LP. (*Sunnyland* from this set was used on "Story of the Blues", CBS 66218).

Forgetting the discographical wrangles (much of the information in the listings is tentative) there's only one thing that matters on these records, and that's Elmore James. His extraordinary power in performance makes it immaterial who's on piano or sax. This power faded only slightly towards the end of his career; always there's the high, intense vocal line straining and twisting over the amplified guitar. The impression his records leave is one man and his music, nothing else.

The UA album gives us some of Elmore's finest music. *Wild, Held, Long tall, I believe, Sinful, Please find* and *Hand* are all classics in the early James repertoire. The first three tracks (chronologically)

are three quarters of his first Chicago session (for Meteor), although part of the sleeve note claims the whole session is included; *Baby what's wrong* is missing. They show James almost complete in his transition from the "country" sound of *Dust my broom* (trumpet) to the tough "urban" sound which he created and which proved so influential. (Listen to Taj Mahal play McTell's *Statesboro' blues* in the James manner!). These are very fine sides, with good Johnny Jones piano, but he hasn't quite hit his groove.

As is to be expected the alternate Flair takes are generally inferior to the issued ones, *Please find* has poor balances and is rather ragged (the issued version of this, available on Blues Classics, is the loudest, most vibrant and best of his *Dust my broom* variants). *Hand in hand*, in both versions, has some of his most impassioned singing and playing; *Long tall* is almost as good as the issued take, but has verse and break transposed, and an extra verse added. It's difficult to see why *Mean, Where can* and *Canton* remained unissued. *Where can* is in the medium tempo he used so well; *Mean* has Elmore chanting over a tension-building riff before the release comes in the last line and the drums carry things over to the next chorus. *Canton* (included here with false vocal start) is one of his better guitar features, based on *Dust my broom*; a medium-paced swinger, it just rocks on.

The only weak track is *Rock* taken at the faster lick that didn't seem to suit Elmore; but the post-take spoken comments have been left on for this issue, and it's fascinating to hear how the emotional tension is relieved in laughter.

My copy doesn't play too well; I suspect certain of the previously-issued tracks are dubbed from 78s and the stereo re-processing (why oh why) may be responsible for the slight distortion and thumpings. This might be just my copy; I hope they aren't all like this, for it's a fine LP.

The Blue Horizon is a different kettle of blues. It's supposedly the whole of Elmore's last two sessions for Bobby Robinson's Fire/Enjoy/Spheresound setup, but I doubt this. There seem to be some takes missing and the second session is a bit short. The music is presented along with the control-room instructions, false starts, tuning and incidental chat which are an essential but unusually unheard part of a recording session (we had a bit on the UA); they're not very distracting, however, and the sense of continuity induced is fascinating. It's like an in-club recording without audience.

Most of the numbers are re-makes, the only new material (on record, that is) is *I have a right, Every day, I gotta go now* and *Mean mistreater*; although *Elmore jumps* is unfamiliar, *Manhattan/Pickin'* is a Bobby's rock variant. This is the latter-day Elmore; a bit subdued and reserved when compared with his earlier recordings (compare *Hand* here and on the UA) but if you like Elmore you won't find much fault with his performance. The rhythm section (New York session men) are poor on *Can't stop, Talk to me* and some other tracks from early in the first session (probably due to their unfamiliarity with the material), and the balance on this session makes the guitar rather distant, which reduces the effect of, e.g., *Talk to me* and tends to highlight the piano, which, although solid, is uninteresting. The balance also makes *Elmore Jumps* virtually a drum solo!

The second session is better, with more prominent guitar, and *Mean mistreatin'* and *Sunnyland* are the standout tracks on the set; but hear also *Twelve year old* (one of his best songs), *Take me* and *Make my*. The talking track is very interesting — Elmore talking about hunting by tractor in Mississippi! He comes over as a shy and probably insecure man who tended to be over-emphatic when he did talk. Unfortunately the Bushy Head tracks are like his piano playing — not too interesting, although *Footrace* rocks along well.

Not two records I'd care to be without — but then I'm an Elmore fan.

BOB YATES

## OUR NEXT ISSUE

WILL INCLUDE a full 'Jazz Research' section, the second part of Norman Simmons's interview with

Mark Gardner, an essay 'Traditions' by Richard Rush, and a review of John Chilton's *Who's Who Of Jazz*.



## BARNEY KESSEL

### KESSEL'S KIT:

Barney Kessel, Carlo Pes (el,g); Antonello Vannuchhi (org); Giovanni Tommaso (el-bs); Enzo Restuccia, Ciro Cicco (perc)

Rome — c. 1969

*B.J.'s samba* :: *Meu Irmao* :: *Malibu* :: *On the Riviera* :: *Lison* :: *Freeway* :: *From my heart* :: *Swing samba* :: *Amelia*

RCA Victor SF8098 (39/11d.)

THE ABLE guitarist who made such an intelligent contribution to Bird's *Stupendous* date of twenty-three years and more ago still plays with verve and inventiveness when the spirit moves him. On this occasion he seems to have drawn inspiration from the bossa nova-styled settings, but the outcome is not altogether a fortunate one, since the very backing which appears to have spurred him on serves in the upshot to bog his guitar lines down in its muddy textures. Power the electric bass may have, but resilience it has not, and the organ's inevitable overtones, as so often occurs, impart a grotesque and sometimes maudlin air to the whole proceedings. In fact it is a real tribute to the drummers involved that the record retains a substantial degree of rhythmic zest despite the tasteless instrumentation. Only slight variations of quality may be discerned over the album's 37½ minutes, and almost none in the leader's own work. Readers who are in a position to sample the music are advised to try *Freeway* for Kessel's apt choice of a tempo, *B.J.'s samba* for his melodic resourcefulness (no common trait this, in these straitened times), and *Malibu* or *Lison* for his svelte way with a ballad. Many worse releases have passed across reviewer's desks already this year, but only keen admirers of this player's work should buy the album on trust.

MICHAEL JAMES

## B.B. KING

### COMPLETELY WELL:

B.B. King (vcl, g); Paul Harris (organ-1, el-p-2, p-3); Hugh McCracken (g); Gerald 'Fingers' Jemmott (el-bs); Herbie Lovelle (d)

New York City — poss. June 1969

*So excited-1,4* :: *No good-1* :: *You're losin' me-2,4* :: *What happened-3,4* :: *Confessin' the blues-3* :: *Key to my kingdom-3,4* :: *Cryin' won't help you now-2* :: *You're mean-2* :: *The thrill is gone-3,5*

4- unknown horns added; Bert 'Super Charts' DeCoteaux (arr);

5- unknown strings added; Bert 'Super Charts' DeCoteaux (arr)

Stateside SSL10299 (39/11d.)

FIRST, TWO corrections. Reviewing "Live

And Well' (SSL10297) in May, I gave dates in

late June 1969 for the 'Well' side, which featured the Harris-McCracken-Jemmott-Lovelle group. Brian Priestley has pointed out that these can't be right, because the LP was being advertised before then. However, they may be correct for at least some of the material here. Secondly, I praised the modernity of 'Live And Well' and called it an obligatory purchase. 'Completely Well', having two sides of Hit Factory stuff, might thus be supposed to be doubly valuable. It is not.

It fights, at the outset, with several disabilities. The cover is appallingly designed; it also bears a sleeve-note by Ralph Gleason, written in the manner of his recent contributions to *Rolling Stone*. 'B.B. King is to the blues guitar what Ernest Hemingway was to the novel', etc. etc. Then there are two more of B.B.'s blues ballads (compare *Please accept my love* on 'Live And Well'): *Key to my kingdom* and *The thrill is gone*. At least, you might think them drawbacks; actually they are more tolerable than much of the rest, and *The thrill is gone* is a lovely thing, a long blues with faint underlining by the strings; a true soul performance. Beside this the messy impudence of *Confessin' the blues* is particularly irritating. The rock accompaniments that seemed so invigorating in 'Live And Well' show themselves, in this more extensive display, as drawing upon a fund of clichés no less rich than those commanded by earlier blues groups. No doubt B.B. is an imposing figure even in this rococo straitjacket, but for evidence of his real stature one must look elsewhere. The blues are showing enough signs of health to make 'Completely Well' look a pretty foolish title.

TONY RUSSELL

## HAROLD McNAIR

### FLUTE & NUT:

Harold McNair (fl) acc by large orchestra

London — c. 1969

*The umbrella man* :: *The night has a thousand eyes* :: *Barnes Bridge* :: *Nomadic Joe* :: *Herb green* :: *Burnt amber*

Harold McNair (fl-1, alt-2) acc strings, woodwind, etc.

London — c. 1969

*You are too beautiful-1* :: *My romance-2*

RCA International INTS1096 (19/11d.)

WHEN IT COMES to a jazz style on the flute,

McNair has no time for compromise. Traditional

concern for purity of tone often goes by the board as he adopts the buzz technique which we first heard from Yusef Lateef in the mid-'fifties. Whilst giving his sound the much-needed body, this approach also lends it a frantic and sometimes faintly ludicrous character. This is a pity, because his grasp of harmony and his melodic inventiveness through the chords appear to have improved greatly since I first heard him down at Scott's about a decade ago. On the other hand, there is no denying the drive and sheer enthusiasm which he transmits to the listener, as, for example, in *Herb Green* (another title for Mr. Peterson's collection) and *Barnes Bridge*, an earthy twelve-bar possibly inspired by gigs at the nearby Bull's Head. This problem of emotional expressiveness is one that dogs all flautists working in the jazz field, and I suppose McNair copes with it as well as any, though after hearing his fine ballad stylings on alto saxophone in *My romance* one wonders why he should bother.

The 37 minutes for which the record plays are further enlivened by scores in a largely conventional but nonetheless effective manner by John Cameron. There are also some really creditable piano solos, of which the best, I believe, is to be heard in *The night has a thousand eyes*, though unlike the arranger this musician, in common with the other sidemen, stays unnamed on the sleeve.

MICHAEL JAMES

## OSCAR PETERSON

### EXCLUSIVELY FOR MY FRIENDS:

#### VOLUME ONE — ACTION:

Oscar Peterson (p); Ray Brown (bs); Ed Thigpen (d)

Villigen — circa 1963

*At long last love* :: *Easy walker* :: *Tin tin deo* :: *I've got a crush on you* :: *Foggy day* :: *Like someone in love*

#### VOLUME TWO — GIRL TALK:

Oscar Peterson (p); Ray Brown (bs); Louis Hayes (d)

Villigen — autumn, 1965

*Robbins nest*

Sam Jones (bs) for Brown

Villigen — circa 1966

*I'm in the mood for love*

Bobby Durham (d) for Hayes

Villigen — November, 1967

*On a clear day* :: *Girl talk*

Oscar Peterson (p solo)

Villigen — early 1968

*Medley: I concentrate on you* :: *Moon river*

#### VOLUME THREE — THE WAY I REALLY PLAY:

Oscar Peterson (p); Sam Jones (bs); Bobby Durham (d)

Villigen — November 1967

*Waltzing is hip* :: *Satin doll* :: *Love is here to stay* :: *Sandy's blues* :: *Alice in wonderland* :: *Noreen's nocturne*

#### VOLUME FOUR — MY FAVOURITE INSTRUMENT:

Oscar Peterson (p solo)

Villigen — early 1968

*Someone to watch over me* :: *Perdido* :: *Body and soul* :: *Who can I turn to?* :: *Bye, bye blackbird* :: *I should care* :: *Lulu's back in town* :: *Little girl blue* :: *Take the 'A' train*

Polydor 109628-31 (£6.7.6)

THE JAZZ piano virtuoso is in reality a rather rare bird. Perhaps only Art Tatum and Oscar Peterson exploit the highest ranges of pianistic skill in the consistent and rigorous manner of the true virtuoso. Peterson is a player



who has sometimes seemed to be the victim of his superb skill as a pianist, as if the trio's nightly bouts of variations on jazz standards were just too easy for him. His music has never fallen below a very high standard of professionalism, nor has it failed to swing, but the overall impression of Oscar Peterson's previous output has been of a vast talent never fully harnessed to the task in hand. It will be no news to readers of jazz magazines that these Polydor recordings by Peterson are something rather special; they have produced a delighted reaction from reviewers and have, rightly in my view, been designated as classics of piano jazz right from the moment of issue. Their superiority over the vast number of earlier records by this artist is indeed suprising, although comparison with previous Peterson albums confirms this beyond question. The feeling of a not-very-deeply-involved running through of set routines, an all too familiar feeling when listening to Peterson LPs, is replaced here by a freshness and a feeling of delight in the music which illuminates every bar. The familiar Peterson trademarks are present, of course, but never used in a sterile or pre-fabricated way. At times Oscar seems to delight in starting a chorus with one of his favorite devices only to shake the listener out of any complacency by a breathtaking show of what can happen to such a device when he brings the full power of his imagination and skill to bear.

The circumstances under which these trio sides were recorded will be familiar to most readers — they feature the musicians playing before a small group of friends in the home of Hans George Brunner-Schwer, an extraordinary recording engineer. The situation obviously suits Peterson, and he plays with a relaxed delight which communicates itself through the music most vividly. Here Peterson the artist is involved in every bar of the music and the result is in pianistic terms quite superlative. Peterson's touch has a sensitivity which is only hinted at on previous recordings; allied to his rich harmonic resource this gives every chord its own distinctive colour, shading and weight; allied to his great rhythmic strength and swing it gives to each phrase a life and buoyancy of its own. And just as on the technical side these discs reveal new aspects of Peterson's art, so too does his deep involvement with the music and emotional resources. The longest performance here is a sixteen and a half minute version of *I'm in the mood for love* consisting of unaccompanied opening and closing passages with a long 'in tempo' section by the trio as its centrepiece. A familiar enough Peterson pattern, of course, but here invested with extraordinary imagination and feeling. The sombre introduction is beautifully realised by means of the most delicate use of touch and of pedalling; and each one of the rich and varied chords glows with warmth. The Tatum-esque runs have a resilience and strength — and a rhythmic potency — which are far removed from the merely decorative use of this device found all too often among jazz pianists. In the centre section the passages of 'Locked hands' chording and the brilliant right hand lines so familiar from Oscar's earlier records are heard, but again sounding newly liberated from any routine considerations. Overall the piece is held together by a balance which is all the more impressive for its lack of obvious external scaffolding. This long ballad work out is indeed a masterpiece, but no more so than the shortest track in the set, the two minute *Lulu's back in town* from the solo album, a high spirited, striding and wholly delightful piece of pianism.

This solo album is unique in Peterson's output, the sessions being recorded to fill out the set after the material from the trio sessions had been edited with a view to the pianist's own preferences in the matter and to the avoiding of duplication with previous issues. The predominance of ballads may suggest a certain sameness, but this is not the case. For each song is given a very individual treatment and the range and subtlety of Peterson's art is clearly revealed in his treatment of these ballads. *Someone to watch over me* is a tribute to Art Tatum, and naturally one has Tatum very much in mind when listening to this music. In many ways Peterson's ballad playing is richer and more sensuous than Tatum's. And on the up-tempo numbers his ability to swing as a solo pianist in a manner quite distinct from Tatum's is shown on such performances as the above mentioned *Lulu's back in town* and the brilliantly inventive *Perdido*. Really there is no space in a normal review to cover all

the outstanding tracks on these four LPs — suffice to mention that in addition to the titles mentioned *At long last love*, *Easy Walker*, *Satin doll* and *Sandy's blues* are quite superlative.

These discs have been out before as individual albums and as such three have been previously reviewed in *Jazz Monthly*: Volume 1 by Alun Morgan in September 1969, Volume 3 by myself in May 1969, and Volume 4 by John Postgate in November 1969. In the present form as a boxed set selling around the six pound mark they are, by jazz collecting standards, a large and somewhat expensive package. One can only say that it is difficult to imagine that anyone who lays out the money will feel other than that he has had the best of the bargain. The production of the album is good, while the pressings and the recording quality are of the very highest order. These four discs are an invitation to countless hours of enjoyable and rewarding listening.

EDDIE LAMBERT

## RHYTHMAKERS:

### BILLY BANKS AND HIS RHYTHMAKERS:

Henry Allen (tpt, vcl-1); Pee Wee Russell (clt, ten); Joe Sullivan (p); Eddie Condon (bj); Jack Bland (g); Al Morgan (bs); Zutty Singleton (d); Billy Banks (vcl-2)

New York City — April 18, 1932

- 11716-1 *Bugle call rag*
- 11717-2 *Oh, Peter -1*
- 11718-1 *Margie -2*

New York City — May 23, 1932

- 11717-3 *Oh, Peter -2*
- 11719-4 *Spider crawl -2*
- 11881-1 *Who's sorry now -2*
- 11882-1 *Take it slow and easy -2*
- 11883-1 *Bald headed mama -2*

Henry Allen (tpt); Jimmy Lord (clt); Pee Wee Russell (ten); Fats Waller (p); Eddie Condon (bj); Jack Bland (g); Pops Foster (bs); Zutty Singleton (d); Billy Banks (vcl-2)

New York City — July 26, 1932

- 12119-1 *I would do anything for you-2*
- 12119-2 *I would do anything for you-2*
- 12120-1 *Mean old bed bug blues-2*
- 12120-2 *Mean old bed bug blues-2*
- 12121-2 *Yellow dog blues-2*
- 12121-3 *Yellow dog blues-2*
- 12122-2 *Yes suh!-2*

Henry Allen (tpt, vcl-1); Tommy Dorsey (tbn); Pee Wee Russell (clt); Happy Cauldwell (ten); Frank Froeba (p); Eddie Condon (bj); Jack Bland (g); Pops Foster (bs); Zutty Singleton (d)

New York City — October 8, 1932

- 12452-1 *Who stole the lock?-1*

*Note:* Material from the above sessions was issued under nine different band names — omitting minor variations — during the 78 era. That quoted above is the one used on this LP, although in fact Banks was not involved in any way with the third session.

**CBS Realm M 52732 (29/11d.)**

IT IS SURPRISING that, pirate editions apart, this is the first LP re-issue of the famous

Rhythmakers records. These are a group of sides made in 1932, mostly built around the singer Billy Banks and all with impressive personnels. The final session, from which only one of the four titles appears here, was made without Banks and had vocals by Henry Allen and Chick Bullock. In a sense it is a pity that this LP contains none of the tracks with a Bullock vocal, for these do highlight by contrast the merits of Bank's singing, such as they are. They are in fact a considerable ebullience and a bizarre quality which may or may not be intentional. As Banks was apparently the 'star' of the group none of the musicians is in the position of a leader trying to prove anything, and the music has, probably as a consequence, a perfectly natural, easy quality. Indeed the spirit of this music is one of the delights of recorded jazz. The close knit and quite unreservedly 'hot' two part ensembles from the first two dates are backed by a superb rhythm section with quite outstanding bass playing by Al Morgan. Henry Allen's work, with its characteristic rhythmic potency, shows a wide range of mood, from a brooding low register style in some of his solos to brusque, almost violent, statements in the ensembles. Some of the best early Pee Wee is to be found here, including examples



of his rarely recorded tenor work, while Joe Sullivan's work is rather more imaginative than that of Fats Waller on the following session and not very much behind in terms of swing. This is all the more admirable when one considers that Waller plays very well on this session, not least behind the other musicians. Condon, Bland and Singleton again play an important part and Pops Foster's bass playing is of great swing. Allen shows admirable qualities in the lead here and disproves the theory that a post-Armstrong trumpet style demands the abandonment of collective ensembles. His work in the final ensembles of *Yellow dog blues* (especially on the classic -3) and *Yes suh!* (a truly blistering performance) are quite superb, as are his fill-ins to the vocal on *Mean old bed bug blues*. The alternate takes of these last two numbers are of great interest, and the second re-inforces, in my view, the theory that the 'second' vocalist in *Bed bug* is Banks singing falsetto, with the vocal interjections off mike by Waller. There is more good Pee Wee tenor here, not least in the band choruses, while in these choruses and in an obbligato role the little known Jimmy Lord makes some very good sounds. The final track from the fourth session is highlighted by a truly 'knocked out' Pee Wee solo, an Allen vocal of similar qualities, a string bass passage of astounding power and more driving ensembles. In his excellent sleeve note Charles Fox describes *Mean old bed bug blues* as 'aesthetically splendid', a phrase which could well be used to describe the entire album. There is some surface noise from the 78s used for the transfer, but not enough to mar some of the most *enjoyable* of all classic jazz recordings. This album should be at the top of the shopping list of every collector who is not already indulging in its delights. EDDIE LAMBERT

## STORY OF THE BLUES – VOLUME 2

- CURLEY WEAVER (vcl, g)  
Atlanta, Ga. – October 26, 1928
- 147305-2 *No no blues*  
LITTLE HAT JONES (vcl, g)  
San Antonio, Texas – June 21, 1929
- 402699-A *Hurry blues*  
EMERY GLEN (vcl, g)  
Atlanta, Ga. – November 7, 1927
- 145157-2 *Blue blazes blues*  
'MOOCH' RICHARDSON (vcl, g)  
Memphis, Tenn. – February 13th, 1928
- 400216-B 'Mooch' Richardson's low down barrelhouse blues,  
Part 2  
LONNIE JOHNSON (vcl, g)  
San Antonio, Texas – March 13, 1928
- 400492-A *Broken levee blues*  
BUDDY MOSS (vcl, g); Joshua White (g)  
New York City – August 21, 1935
- 17985-1 *Undertaker blues*  
J.B. LENOIR (vcl, g)  
Chicago – July 17, 1960
- BH103; VER110 *Mojo boogie*  
SON HOUSE (vcl, g)  
New York City – April 1965  
*Pearline*
- WHISTLIN' ALEX MOORE (vcl, p)  
Dallas, Texas – December 5, 1929
- 149531-2 *West Texas woman*  
SYLVESTER PALMER (vcl, p)  
Chicago – November 15, 1929
- 403307-A *Lonesome man blues*  
GEORGE NOBLE (vcl, p)  
Chicago – February 11, 1935
- C-897-2 *The Seminole blues*  
CRIPPLE CLARENCE LOFTON (vcl, p); Big Bill Broonzy (g)  
Chicago – April 2, 1935
- C-1074-A *Brown skin girls*  
BUMBLE BEE SLIM (vcl); Myrtle Jenkins (p); Casey Bill Weldon (g)  
Chicago – February 5, 1936
- C-1224-2 *Ramblin' with that woman*

- ROOSEVELT SCOTT (vcl); prob. Jesse Coleman (p); Big Bill Broonzy (g); prob. Alfred Elkins (vcl, bs)  
Chicago – September 13, 1939
- WC-2712-A *Black gal blues*  
ROOSEVELT SYKES (vcl, p); prob. Alfred Elkins (bs)  
Chicago – November 21, 1941
- C-4057-1 *Training camp blues*  
CHAMPION JACK DUPREE (vcl, p); Wilson Swain or Ransom Knowling (bs)  
Chicago – January 28, 1941
- C-3592-1 *Junker blues*  
MAGGIE JONES (vcl); Louis Armstrong (cnt); Fletcher Henderson (p)  
New York City – December 17, 1924
- 140191-2 *Good time flat blues*  
CLARA SMITH (vcl); Lemuel Fowler (p)  
New York City – May 25, 1926
- 142251-1 *Whip it to a jelly*  
CLEO GIBSON (vcl) AND HER HOT THREE: Henry Mason (tpt); J.Neal Montgomery (p); unknown g  
Atlanta, Ga. – March 14, 1929
- 402311-B *I've got Ford movements in my hips*  
MARTHA COPELAND (vcl); Clarence Adams (clt); James P. Johnson (p and comments)  
New York City – June 9, 1928
- 146420-3 *Desert blues*  
VICTORIA SPIVEY (vcl); John Erby (p); Lonnie Johnson (g)  
New York City – October 28, 1927
- 81584-A *Christmas morning blues*  
LIZA BROWN AND ANN JOHNSON (vcls); Jim Jackson (g); unknown p; percussion effects  
New York City – September 19, 1929
- 149026-3 *Get on out of here*  
THE YAS YAS GIRL: Merline Johnson (vcl); Blind John Davis (p); unknown bs  
Chicago – June 19, 1941
- C-3887-1 *Good old easy street*  
BIG MAYBELLE (vcl); Eli Robinson (tbn); Sam "The Man" Taylor (ten); David MacRae (bar); Lee Anderson (p); Brownie McGhee (g); Al Hall (bs); Marty Wilson (d); Leroy Kirkland (arr, cond)  
New York City – June 11, 1953
- CO-49523-1 *Maybelle's blues*  
KANSAS JOE AND MEMPHIS MINNIE: Kansas Joe (vcl, g); Memphis Minnie (g)  
New York City – June 18, 1929
- 148708-3 *That will be alright*  
MISSISSIPPI MUD STEPPERS: Charlie McCoy (mand); Walter Vincent (g)  
Jackson, Miss. – December 15, 1930
- 404714- *Jackson stomp*  
JAZZBO TOMMY AND HIS LOWLANDERS: Jazzbo Tommy Settles (vcl, gazoo (sic)); unknown p; g  
Not Springs, Ark. – March 18, 1937
- HS-81-2 *Blaze face cow*  
DUSKEY DAILEY AND HIS BAND: Duskey Dailey (vcl, p); Sugar Penigar (ten); unknown hca; g; bs; d  
Dallas, Texas – June 16, 1939
- DAL-842-1 *Miss Georgia blues*  
WILLIE 'LONG TIME' SMITH (vcl); unknown p; Willie Lacey (g)  
Chicago – June 13, 1947
- CCO-4801 *My buddy Doctor Clayton*  
OTIS RUSH (vcl, g); Walter 'Shakey' Horton (hca); Harold Ashby (ten); Little Brother Montgomery (p); Louis Miles (g); Willie Dixon (bs); Odie Payne (d)  
Chicago – 1957
- C1018 *Love that woman*  
MAGIC SAM: Magic Sam Maghett (vcl, g); Little Brother Montgomery (p); Mack Thompson (bs-g); Billie Stepney (d)



Chicago — 1957

1014 *All your love*

JOHN LITTLEJOHN (vcl, g); Monroe Jones, Jr. (g); Alvin Nicholls (bs); Robert Pulliam (ten); Willie Young (ten); Booker Sidgraves (d)

Chicago — November 14, 1968

*Been around the world*

CBS 66232 (29/11d.) (2 LP set)

AFTER THE SUCCESS of Volume 1 (CBS

66218) it was only sensible (and very welcome)

that a follow-up should be issued. There has of course, been an upsurge in blues scholarship in the last few years and we have now attained a reasonable standard, the book *The Story of the Blues* and Mr. Oliver's previous works being very important in this development. (See also the *Blues paperback* series, the first four being reviewed in this issue).

I'm very much opposed to anthologies for anthology's sake; the editor and I agree that the blues re-issue scene is reaching yet more ridiculous heights in this respect. But when a collection such as this sets out with a definite purpose, and proves to be both instructive and entertaining, there is no criticism to be made on this score. And one thing about Mr. Oliver's record compilations to accompany his books — they are all very *listenable* — there aren't any appalling tracks included merely for their slight interest or to fill up.

This set covers a large number of minor (and a few major) artists who found no place on Volume 1. The tracks are arranged under four headings, corresponding to the four sides — Guitar Pickets, Piano Players, Blues Girls and Blues Groups, and this makes a pleasant contrast to the approximate "continuous development" theme of the first set. Once again the compilation is limited by what material is available to CBS, and although this set fares better on post-war material than the first (thanks largely to the enterprise of Blue Horizon) it still has not been possible to cover by representative tracks the important West Coast, Chicago, Memphis, Detroit and Southern scenes of the 50s (although we have Rush and Magic Sam, there's no Muddy, Wolf, Hopkins or Hooker). From the pre-war period the Decca jazz-influenced sound and the Bluebird beat are lacking. But these are small carps when there is such a wealth of goodies to be heard.

The sleeve bears full discographical details and very full notes, so it's almost superfluous to describe the musical content. One or two points, though. In some ways it's the less-often heard artists that provide the best listening — for example Big Maybelle, who's at last getting some recognition (*Maybelle's blues* is from her tremendous re-issue LP on Epic — watch out for this). John Littlejohn shows there are still good young bluesmen in Chicago; his slowed-down version of Jimmy Rogers' *If it ain't me babe* is off his album on Arhoolie — thanks to Chris Strachwitz for recording him. The tracks by George Noble, Lofton and Bumble Bee Slim all show good piano, and Alex Moore's track is a gem! After seeing Alex last year it's difficult to believe this was made forty years ago. It's a shame that later developments in Texas piano could not be outlined by the inclusion of Pinetop Burks or Son Becky, or perhaps Robert Shaw. The classic blues is having a small revival and is very worthy of it; if you don't agree just listen to the Blues Girls side, and especially Cleo Gibson — a classic by anybody's standards.

Sound quality is generally good. Some of the tracks have of course been available on LP before, but if you've got them all, you're a richer man than I am. This is one to buy and keep alongside the book and Volume 1.

BOB YATES

## SWEET PAIN

SWEET PAIN:

Dick Heckstall-Smith (ten, sop); John O'Leary (hca); Sam Crozier (pocket tpt-1, vcl-2, p); Stuart Cowell (g); Keith Tillman (fender, bs); Junior Dunn (d); Annette Brox (vcl-3)

London — 1969/70

*The steamer-4 :: Changin' your mind-2,3 :: Rubbin' and scrapin' :: Sick and tired-1,3 :: The rooster crows at midnight-1,2,3,5, :: Troubles trouble-1,3 :: Don't break down-2,3 :: General smit :: Trouble in mind-3*

4- O'Leary out; 5- unknown vcl added

Annette Brox (vcl); Sam Crozier (12-string g)

same location and date

*It's a woman's way*

unknown vcl, speech, handclapping, miscellaneous noise

same location and date

*Song of the Medusa*

Mercury 20146SMCL (39/11d.)

THIS — WAS my first thought — may well be the worst record ever made. But a claim like

that, I suspect, gives the thing a perverse attractiveness, and the last thing I want to do is draw anyone nearer than a hargepole's length from 'Sweet Pain'. So this is just a very bad, very boring, very stupid LP. Plumbing the depths of its utter and unredeemed awfulness is out of place in a magazine devoted to good music, but a few drainside notes may interest the inquisitive.

There are some songs, handled by Crozier and Mrs Brox almost as if they were objects of value. There are some instrumental workouts, of which the most catastrophic (this is saying something) is *General Smit*. The listener will find it hard to believe that this is not a misprint. (But he will enjoy the rich irony of titles like *Don't break down* and *Sick and tired*.) The pretentious, the witless and the ludicrous are most triumphantly united in *Song of the Medusa*, but it is scarcely worth pointing this out, since no one but a reviewer would ever play the LP to the end of Side 2, if indeed get as far as turning it over.

Presented in a double sleeve, the design of which one can only call appropriate to the contents, this wart of a record purports to offer an 'Impromptu blues session' by 'top British bluesmen'. The use of the term 'blues' is as spurious as it's insulting, but there's no need to be annoyed by it, because the record's so ridiculous from *any* point of view. I imagine there's no risk of a second Sweet Pain offering, but you never know. 'As a dog returneth to his vomit,' says the Scripture, 'So a fool returneth to his folly'.

TONY RUSSELL

## JOHN TCHICAI

CADENTIA NOVA DANICA:

Hugh Steinmetz (tpt); Kim Menzer (tbn); John Tchicai, Karsten Vogel (alt); Max Bryel (p, bar); Steffen Andersen (bs); Giorgio Musoni (African drums); Ivan Krill, Robidoo (perc)

Aarhus, Denmark — October 27, 1968

*Inside Thule :: L'lanto del Indio :: Kirsten :: Orga fleur super asam :: Nova*

John Tchicai (alt); Steffen Andersen (bs); Ivan Krill (perc)

same date

*Paa Tirsdag*

Polydor 2343 015 (29/10d.)

THE FIRST point to be made about this release is that it is a very different proposition from

the lean, spiky solos that Tchicai committed to record in his days with the New York Contemporary Five or the New York Art Quartet. The emphasis is placed heavily on the ensemble with the massive weight of the percussion very much to the fore. Excessive use of echo chamber exaggerates the ponderous, almost intimidating effect of the shifting cacophonic textures, which are largely obtained by deployment through the horns of those extremes of vocalization pioneered some six or seven years ago by Albert Ayler. In fact in certain respects pieces like *Inside Thule* or *Orga* might arguably be regarded as adaptations for a larger band of the Ayler approach, which leant heavily upon tonal virtuosity and diverse and often unrelated rhythmic strata for its impact, melodic variation being of lesser concern and harmonic interest more a question of coincidence than anything else.

The re-working of these modernistic techniques for a larger ensemble has entailed substantial modifications, although the two arrangers, Tchicai and Vogel, have eschewed all conventional jazz methods in carrying out their task. Thus it is that *Kirsten* is dominated by one interminably repeated motif doubled by the percussion, the cymbals setting up a grotesque machine-like rhythm; similarly, *L'lanto*, which the sleeve tells us is an 'anonymous South American folksong', finds its melodic character thoroughly submerged by related techniques.

If these 43 minutes are unlikely to be greeted with much acclaim



by adherents of more orthodox jazz styles, it is not, I believe, because of their unfamiliarity, but as a direct result of their restricted musical content. Transmutations in the post-Coleman idiom, which is now getting long in the tooth after nearly fifteen years, have represented a retreat from the melodic horizons he was deemed to have opened up. Ayler, who, like so many of his contemporaries, by-passed the melodic challenge Coleman set, but who at least devised a personal style, now seems to have given up the ghost and moved back into R. and B. territory. It is to the credit of the soloists featured on this record that for the most part they attempt to draw some melodic interest from the recalcitrant material — May Bryel's baritone foray in *Nova* is the best effort — but by and large the listener must seek his satisfaction in tonal and rhythmic areas, ones which, it must be admitted, have been explored more closely and, I fancy, quite definitively, elsewhere.

MICHAEL JAMES

## STANLEY TURRENTINE

### ANOTHER STORY:

Thad Jones (fl-h); Stanley Turrentine (ten); Cedar Walton (p); Buster Williams (bs); Mickey Roker (d)

New York City — March 3, 1969

*Get it :: The way you look tonight :: Stella by starlight-1 :: Quittin' time :: Six and four*  
-1 omit Jones

### Blue Note BST84336 (47/6d.)

AT A TIME when jazz seems to have reached a fresh nadir and record companies are intent on producing expensive non-events, how refreshing it is to hear an album such as "Another Story". Turrentine's recent LPs have not been anything to type home about but with this set he moves into the category of Talent Deserving Wider Recognition. Take just three tracks and consider his approach to the material at hand; *Get it* is one of those basic, fundamental blues and Stanley sounds as cavernous and authoritative as Gene Ammons. *Stella* is a ballad so the tenor saxist treats the tune with as much respect as we have a right to expect from ballad masters such as Ben Webster. Oliver Nelson's *Six and four* is a bit more challenging and there goes Turrentine, creating a fine solo by exposing his improvisations in a fragmentary way at the outset then assembling the fragments into a well-sculpted statement with the cunning of a Sonny Rollins. I must admit I have probably underrated Turrentine in the past, certainly since his early records with Max Roach. He showed great potential on a Time LP which Realm released here then he seemed to get hung up on the tenor-organ scene and my interest began to fade. (His wife is, of course, organist Shirley Scott.) So with "Another Story" chalk up a success for Turrentine and also Duke Pearson who has produced forty minutes of unfettered jazz, free from out-of-tune singers chanting rubbishy lyrics, devoid of strings and notable for the absence of concessions to any extra-musical stumbling blocks. Thad Jones obviously loved it too for his solos amount to some of his most constructive of recent years. And his tune, *Quittin' time*, is one of those very attractive modulatory themes which reminds one of Clifford Brown's flair for writing. The rhythm section is superb; Mickey Roker, drummer with Duke Pearson's big band, seems at home in any context, for I first heard him playing superbly with the Ray Bryant Trio. Cedar Walton's style is flowing and melodic, as graceful as Tommy Flanagan. Really there is no reason why you should avoid hearing this album when next you are at your local shop. Try *Quittin' time* as a sample; you will probably end up by purchasing the album.

ALUN MORGAN

## TONY WILLIAMS

### TURN IT OVER:

Khalid Yasin (Larry Young) (org); John McLaughlin (g); Jack Bruce (bs); Tony Williams (d, vcl)

New York City — c. early 1970

*To whom it may concern — Them :: To whom it may concern — Us :: This night this song :: Big Nick :: Right on :: Once I loved :: Vuelta abajo :: A famous blues :: Allah be praised*

### Polydor 2425 019 (42/6d.)

I HAVE considered the following statement with care and can assure readers that it is not made lightly: "Turn It Over" is the most boring record I have

heard in 1970. I now know why the group is called the Tony Williams Lifetime, it is because a playing time of thirty-four and a half minutes can be made to sound like a lifetime. Apart from Coltrane's tune *Big Nick* on which Tony Williams sounds like a jazzman, the playing time is made up of a continuous droning dirge, some of which appears to be made by Williams's voice. If you love jazz, if Tony Williams's drumming ever lifted you out of your seat when he was with Miles, if you want to save yourself forty-two and six, forget this one.

ALUN MORGAN

## JOHNNY YOUNG

### FAT MANDOLIN:

Johnny Young (vcl, mand); Paul Osher (hca); Otis Spann (p); Sammy Lawhorn (g,-1, el-bs); S.P. Leary (d)

New York City — April 6, 1969

*Moaning and groaning :: Heard my doorbell ring :: My train-fare out of town-2 :: Lula Mae :: Jackson bound :: Walking slow-1 :: Deal the cards :: Lend me your love-1,2,3 :: Lorraine :: Prison bound-1,4 :: Little girl :: Mean black snake-1*  
-2 Young plays g (doubling on mand in *Lend me your love*) 3-Osher out; 4-Osher, Spann and Leary out

### Blue Horizon 7-63852 (39/11d.)

REGULAR RECORDING dates have done wonders for Johnny Young; now, at his best, he can cut almost anyone in Chicago. His voice has the resonance and confidence of a Johnny Shines or a Sunnyland Slim — indeed, there are times when it resembles Slim's quite strikingly — and he plays the mandolin with verve and even daring. Though chiefly composed of medium and slow-medium paced songs, his latest album, which is almost 47 minutes long, holds, even grips the listener with a determination all too rarely found these days. Of course, he's leading a fine group; Spann rolls and thunders like a man possessed, and Osher, though somewhat in the background, sustains a high standard of invention. The use of the mandolin creates intriguing tone colours and, Young's interplay with Spann in *Lend me your love*, and with Lawhorn in the two-man version of *Prison bound*, unites old and new devices in a most satisfying way. The songs, which are almost all credited to Young, are a well chosen selection, with *Deal the cards* a particularly attractive composition. (This is also to be found on Blue Horizon's sampler of their black and white catalogue, the two-record 'How Blue Can We Get?' (PR 45/46), which, at 29/11d. is worth investigating.) 'Fat Mandolin' is the best modern blues album I have heard this year.

TONY RUSSELL

## 2) Origin Blues LPs

THE ORIGIN JAZZ LIBRARY which instituted the first major reissue programme for blues collectors, was founded by New York enthusiasts Pete Whelan and Bill Givens in 1961. One supposes, from the label's name, that jazz albums were planned as well as blues ones, but only OJL-9 veered from the blues path. The virtue of this single-mindedness was that it provided blues fans with the first-ever reissues of many legendary artists: Son House, Skip James, Tommy Johnson, Sam Collins, a dozen others. Charley Patton and Henry Thomas had been on earlier releases, such as the Folkways Anthology, but each had a full LP in Origin's first three issues. Productions like these compensated for, if they did not entirely excuse, the label's neglect of artists whom the organisers did not favour; Blind Lemon Jefferson was ruled out from the start, and the other Texan guitarists had no better luck. Piano-players, of course, were anathema, unless incidental accompanists (e.g. in jug bands). The bluesmen of Alabama eventually had their turn, but those of Georgia and the Carolinas waited for other reissuers. Early releases were, by today's standards, acoustically primitive; the remastering of battered 78s was tolerably efficient, but poor



material led to poor pressings, with high surface noise throughout and between tracks, and an equally high frequency of bubbles and other defects in the vinyl. (Most of the early copies of OJL-4 were as good as unplayable.) True, it is only now that one reckons up these faults, with Yazooos and so forth showing us the way, but the pressing quality of Origins needs to be mentioned in this survey since all the issues are still available, and my chief purpose is to describe them to collectors as yet undecided about purchasing them.

Then there is the problem of duplication, most acute in the case of Charley Patton; ten of OJL-1's twelve sides, and fourteen of OJL-7's sixteen, are now available (in stereo) on Yazoo L-1020 in some instances dubbed from 78s cleaner than those used by Origin. Elsewhere the catalogue has suffered less from duplication, and individual examples will be mentioned in the reviews. Several early OJLs have been re-pressed with notes or lyric-transcriptions by Dave Evans. The rise in acoustic quality is not considerable, but the notes are valuable. On the other hand, the leaflet of biographical articles, compiled by Gayle Dean Wardlow to accompany OJLs 2, 5 and 8, is presumably out of print, which is a sad loss, for it contained much information not easily available elsewhere.

This survey, which will over a period of five months cover all the Origin releases to date, acts both as documentation and tribute, providing complete discographical details (checked against recent research and the revised *B&GR*) and critical notes, and acknowledging the splendid work done by Whelan, Givens and their helpers in assembling this remarkable library of classic blues performances.

## CHARLIE PATTON

### THE IMMORTAL CHARLEY PATTON, VOL.1:

Charley Patton (vcl, g)

Richmond, Ind. — June 14, 1929

15227 *I'm goin' home*

Henry Sims (vln-1) added

Grafton, Wis. — c. late November 1929

L-37-1 *Going to move to Alabama-1*

L-38-1 *Elder Greene blues-1*

L-42-1 *Frankie and Albert*

L-43-2 *Some these days I'll be gone*

L-44-3 *Green River blues*

Grafton, Wis. — c. early December 1929

L-62-1 *I shall not be moved*

L-64-1 *Running wild blues-1*

Sims out; Willie Brown (g, speech) added

Grafton, Wis. — c. May 28, 1930

L-432-1 *Moon going down*

Brown out

New York City — January 30, 1934

14725-2 *High sheriff blues*

14727-1 *Stone pony blues*

New York City — February 1, 1934

14757-1 *Poor me*

Origin © OJL-1

YEARS ELAPSED before I truly enjoyed OJL-1

Even now I do not often play it for pleasure;

Charley Patton is not a musician with whom I feel a prompt empathy. This is partly because I have no *idea* of Patton, no mental picture to consider as I listen. There is the photograph; there are the reminiscences of dozens of bluesmen; and there is the music. And hardly anywhere do these elements cohere. The fault, of course, lies in me, or in the research sources, not in Patton himself; but I fail, nevertheless, to experience the emotional punch of a Jefferson or a McTell. Not that one should look for that sort of effect in, say, *Some these days*, *Running wild* or *Frankie and Albert*; those fit better the 'showman' image handed down by Son House and others. (The first two, incidentally, appear to be based upon the popular songs with similar names, though *Some these days* is a long way from Sophie Tucker.) But, too often, when Patton uses the full — and astonishing — bluesiness of his

voice, it is for a song too diffuse to stand up to it; *Stone pony* for instance, or even the instrumentally stupendous *Moon going down*. On the other hand, when content and delivery are better matched, the effect can be startling; *Poor me* and *High sheriff* have everything one could ask from a blues.

When this album first appeared, it won great praise; but not often for its diversity. It has only four 'normal' blues; the rest is religious or 'songster' material, except for the unclassifiable maverick *Poor me*, and consequently one sees very quickly that Patton was a versatile artist; much more so than those of his Delta contemporaries whom we know through records. John Fahey's forthcoming book gives several reasons for this breadth of repertoire; but one needs no books to perceive why Patton was so respected by fellow musicians. His talent was remarkably extensive, and OJL-1 proves it conclusively.

## REALLY! THE COUNTRY BLUES

TOMMY JOHNSON (vcl, g); Charlie McCoy (g)

Memphis — February 4, 1928

41839-2 *Maggie Campbell blues*

WILLIAM MOORE (g), with speech, possibly by Moore

Chicago — c. January 1928

20323-1 *Old country rock*

SON HOUSE (vcl, g)

Grafton, Wis. — May 28, 1930

L-408-2 *My black mama — part 1*

L-409-2 *My black mama — part 2*

SUNNY BOY AND HIS PALS: Papa Harvey Hull (vcl); Long

Cleve Reed, - - - Wilson (g)

Chicago — c. April 8, 1927

12690 *France blues*

SKIP JAMES (vcl, g)

Grafton, Wis. — c. February 1931

L-746-1 *Devil got my woman*

ISHMAN BRACEY (vcl, g)

Grafton, Wis. — c. March 1930

L-239-2 *Woman woman blues*

SAM COLLINS (vcl, g)

Richmond, Ind. or Chicago — c. April 23, 1927

12736 *The jail house blues*

GEORGE "BULLET" WILLIAMS (hca); unknown (vcl)

Chicago — c. May 1928

20590-2 *Touch me light mama*

HENRY SIMS (vcl, vln); Charley Patton (g)

Grafton, Wis. — c. December 1929

L-65-1 *Tell me man blues*

BUSTER JOHNSON (vcl); James Cole (vln); Tommie Bradley and

prob. self (g); prob. Eddie Dimmitt (mand); unknown (wbd)

Richmond, Ind. — January 16, 1932

18323 *Undertaker blues*

HENRY THOMAS (vcl, g)

Chicago — c. June 13, 1928

*Don't ease me in*

GARFIELD AKERS (vcl, g); Joe Callicott (g)

Memphis — c. September 23, 1929

M-201 *Cottonfield blues — part 1*

M-202-A *Cottonfield blues — part 2*

Origin © OJL-2

THIS IS BEYOND any doubt one of the finest anthologies ever issued or indeed issuable. More

than half of the performances are unimpeachable classics; Skip James and Garfield Akers are presented by what, in my opinion, are their best recordings. In some moods I should add Tommy Johnson, Son House and Sam Collins to that statement. Constant playing over the last five years has imbedded this music in my memory, and I can think of only one moment where the level of excellence seems to drop — in Ishman Bracey's unsuccessful attempt to work in the style of Tommy Johnson.

Some anthologies fail to express the quality of their component parts; this one emphasises it, by judicious (or, perhaps, unconsciously happy) juxtapositions. *Devil got my woman* is colossal; but its eerie, wayward beauty is highlighted by the utterly simple, almost jolly *France blues* which precedes it. Again, the delicate



instrumental patterns of *Maggie Campbell* and *Old country rock* seem to underline the stark repetitiveness and emotional escalation of *My black mama*; an effect not unlike that at the end of Side 2, where the wham-bang string band accompanying Buster Johnson, and the lilting rhythm of Henry Thomas, leads into the relentless *Cottonfield blues*. No doubt this is an attitude of listening, so to speak, which the musicians' original audiences may never have adopted; but let's get our auditory kicks where we can. There can't be a genuine country blues enthusiast who lacks this LP; if there is, he must be either broke or mad. And if there's a reader who wants to know what all this fuss over old time blues is about, he can do no better than start here.

### HENRY THOMAS

#### HENRY THOMAS SINGS THE TEXAS BLUES:

Henry Thomas (Ragtime Texas) (vcl, g, reed-pipes-1)  
Chicago — c. early July 1927

*John Henry-1*

*Cottonfield blues*

Chicago — October 1927

*The fox and the hounds-1*

*Red River blues-1*

*The little red caboose-1*

*Bob McKinney*

*Shanty blues*

*Woodhouse blues*

*When the train comes along*

Chicago — October 7, 1927

C-1220 *Honey, won't you allow me one more chance?*

C-1222 *Run, Mollie, run*

Chicago — c. June 13, 1928

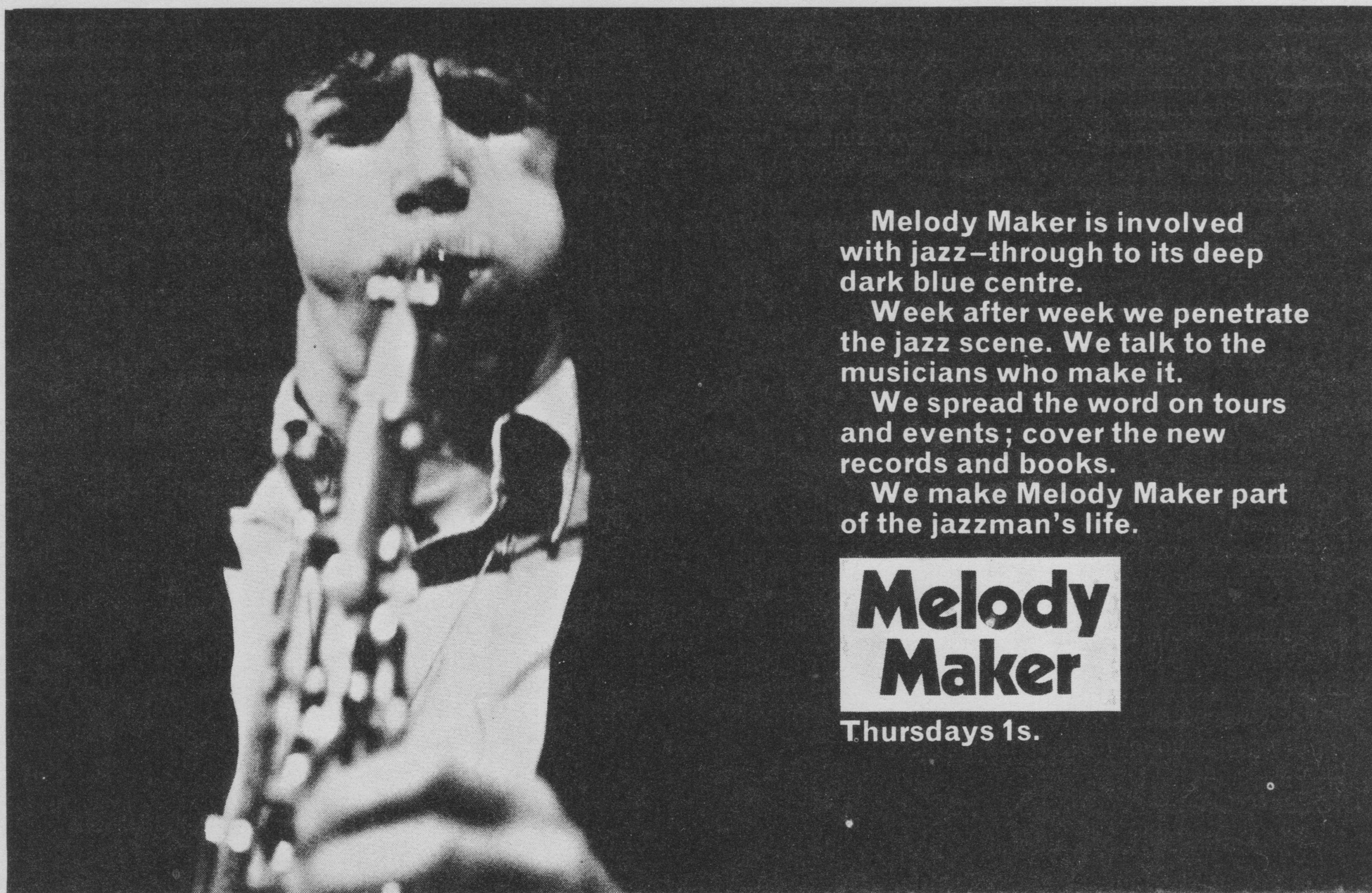
C-1999 *Bull doze blues-1*

C-2002 *Texas worried blues*

*Texas easy street blues*

Origin © OJL-3

LIKE A VICTORIAN children's book, OJL-3 is both entertaining and instructive. Entertaining, because Henry Thomas was a born performer, who valued *joie de vivre* more than the niceties of structure and chord-changing. 'He does not seem', wrote Charters, 'to have had a strong musical sense'; true of his theoretical knowledge, but unjust in every other respect. His blues, for example, have wholly charming melodies, and some are most movingly sung — *Cottonfield*, for one. This was his first release; 'something new and different', said the Vocalion advertisements. Lyrically it was scarcely new, but the rhythm was novel, and no one in the subsequent forty years has recaptured Thomas's sound. (Though Canned Heat's *Going up the country* was a neat pastiche.) Instructive? Remarkably so. Thomas's repertoire was that of the experienced songster — a bag of dance-tunes, minstrel ditties and traditional workouts. Often he assembled several themes in a single performance, a characteristic of very great interest to the student of black/white interaction (and treated at some length in my *Blacks, Whites And Blues*); *Bob McKinney* is the outstanding example, a four-part medley. Generally he remembered these old time compositions rather sketchily; the minstrel song *Little red caboose* differs considerably from contemporary white versions (such as Paul Warmack's Gully Jumpers' on RCA RD-7870, 'The Railroad in Folksong'). As a bluesman, too, he represents an early stage of development; *Texas worried blues* has stanzas of one phrase thrice sung, while *Woodhouse* has the marks of a woman's blues of the mid-twenties. Already, in *Texas easy street*, he had discovered how to devise quite complex blues accompaniments; but another blues, *Red River*, used fragments from the past like 'Honey babe, I'm all out and down'. In short, there are few albums so rewarding to listener and student alike. None of the tracks have been duplicated, but all Thomas's other recordings are available on Folkways, Roots or Yazoo collections, a tidy coverage of a fascinating body of music.



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## THE GREAT JUG BANDS

**CANNON'S JUG STOMPERS:** Gus Cannon (bj, jug, vcl); Elijah Avery (g); Noah Lewis (hca)

Memphis — September 9, 1928

47001-2 *Heart breakin' blues*

Hosea Woods (g, speech) replaces Avery, vcl by Lewis

Memphis — October 1, 1929

56318-2 *Going to Germany*

**MEMPHIS MINNIE** (vcl, g) and Her Jug Band: Jed Davenport (hca); unknown g, jug

Chicago — September 9, 1930

C-6082 *Grandpa and grandma blues*

**BIRMINGHAM JUG BAND:** prob. David Miles (vcl, hca); unknown mand; g; jug

Atlanta — December 11, 1930

404677-B *German blues*

404682-C *Gettin' ready for this trial*

**JACK KELLY** (vcl, g) and his South Memphis Jug Band: Will

Batts (vln); Dan Sane (g); 'Doctor' D.M. Higgs (jug)

New York City — August 1, 1933

13714-2 *Red ripe tomatoes*

13722 *Cold iron bed*

**WHISTLER AND HIS JUG BAND:** unknown vln; mand; g; jug; scat vcl/slide whistle

St. Louis — April 29, 1927

80797 *The jug band special*

**MEMPHIS JUG BAND:** Will Shade (hca); Vol Stevens (vcl, g);

Will Weldon (g); Ben Ramey (kazoo); Charlie Polk (jug); unknown (speech)

Memphis — February 13, 1928

41888-2 *Coal oil blues*

Charlie Burse (g) replaces Weldon; no vcl

Memphis — September 15, 1928

47038-2 *Jug band waltz*

**ELDER RICHARD BRYANT'S SANCTIFIED SINGERS:** Elder Richard Bryant; Bessie Johnson, prob. Belinda Taylor, prob. Sally Sumler (vcl); prob. Will Shade (hca); unknown mand; g; jug; wbd

Memphis — February 28, 1928

400469-B *Come over here*

**DIXIELAND JUG BLOWERS:** Hess Grundy (tbn); Lucien Brown; Lockwood Lewis (alt, sop); Clifford Hayes (vln); Johnny Gateswood (p); Cal Smith (g); Henry Clifford (jug); Elizabeth Washington (vcl)

Chicago — June 6, 1927

38637-2 *Garden of joy — blues*

**KENTUCKY JUG BAND:** Hooks Tilford (alt); unknown fl; g;

--- Phillips (jug)

Chicago — August 1930

C-6311 *Walkin' cane stomp*

**NOAH LEWIS'S JUG BAND:** Noah Lewis (vcl, hca); prob. Yank Rachell (mand); prob. Sleepy John Estes (g); unknown (jug)

Memphis — November 26, 1930

64736 *Ticket agent blues*

64737-2 *New Minglewood blues*

**MEMPHIS SHEIKS:** Will Shade (hca); poss. Vol Stevens (bjo-mand); poss. Charlie Burse (g); poss. Jab Jones (jug); Charlie Nickerson (vcl); speech and singing by one of the band, poss. Burse

Memphis — November 21, 1930

62990 *He's in the jailhouse now*

Origin  OJL-4

GOOD-TIME MUSIC regularly makes an impression upon the pop charts; now it's Mungo

Jerry, a while back it was the Lovin' Spoonful, before that the Rooftop Singers. 'The Great Jug Bands' brings it all back home, and if Origin could only secure decent distribution they would be scoring heavily with this splendid album (and with its follow-up OJL-19). Probably the best of the jug anthologies, it covers a great deal of ground.

Eleven tracks belong to Memphis, and they include the standout items: Noah Lewis's moving *Going to Germany*, the Memphis Jug Band's hectic *He's in the jailhouse now*, and the superbly integrated South Memphis Jug Band pieces, with the low-down singing of Jack Kelly. I've discussed the work of Elder Richard Bryant


and his accompanists, in my *Blues Unlimited* column; like the rest of his recordings this is magnificent sanctified jamming. Vol. Stevens sings *Coal oil blues*, which is very like his own *Vol Stevens blues* of the year before; *Jug band waltz* is a relaxed instrumental, with Shade and Ramey prominent.

After years of luke-warmth I am beginning to like the Birmingham Jug Band a lot; *Gettin' ready* is an extraordinarily interesting song, but Miles's accent is hard to unravel. Spirited mandolin-playing here and in *The jug band special* by Whistler's group, possibly from Virginia or Kentucky. Definitely from Kentucky, the *Walkin' cane* crew — also known as Phillips' Louisville Jug Band — possessed an adept flautist and guitarist, who join slap-tonguer Tilford to make a joyous noise. *Garden of joy* is rather terrible, though Cal Smith can be heard playing some typically fine runs.


As a sampler of rural and urban jug bands, and an illustration of their importance in the blues tradition, this album leads its field.

TONY RUSSELL


## TOURS

 **HARRY JAMES'S** erstwhile drummer, **Buddy Rich**, will be leading his band in Britain during October and


November, dates in the former month being: — Tue: October 27—Eastbourne, Congress Theatre; Wed. 28—Croydon, Fairfield Hall; Thu. 29—Bristol, Colston Hall; Fri. 30—Hammersmith, Odeon.

 **THE Senegal African Ballet**, a company of 40 musicians, singers and dancers, appear at the following


locations during October: — Wed. 21—Bournemouth, Winter Gardens; Thu. 22—Southport, Floral Hall; Fri. 23—Newcastle, City Hall; Sat. 24—Oaken-gates, Town Hall; Sun. 25—Wakefield, Theatre Club; Mon. 26—London, Royal Albert Hall; Tue. 27—Bristol, Colston Hall; Wed. 28—Solihull, Civic Hall; Thu. 29—Croydon, Fairfield Hall.

 **EARL HINES** and his quartet will be appearing in England during the coming months, three October


dates being Wed. 28—Hammersmith, Odeon ('Jazz Expo'); Thu. 29—Southport, Floral Hall; Fri. 30—Chatham, Central Hall.

 **THE 'American Folk, Blues and Gospel Festival '70'** tours Britain during October and November. The

line-up is Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Champion Jack Dupree, Bukka White, Willie Dixon's Chicago Blues All-Stars featuring Shakey Horton, Clifton James, Lee Jackson and Lafayette Leak. October dates are, apart from 'Jazz Expo', Fri. 30—Bournemouth, Winter Gardens; Sat. 31—Manchester, Free Trade Hall. On November 1st the group play at Leicester's De Montfort Hall, returning to England on the 17th.

 **THE 'Jazz Expo '70'** line-up is as follows, with the opening concert at the Royal Festival Hall and the re-

mainder at the Hammersmith Odeon: — Sat. October 24—Ray Charles, his Orchestra and The Raelets; Sun. 25—As above; Mon. 26—Elvin Jones Quartet, Albert Mangelsdorff Quartet, Nucleus; Tue. 27—Modern Jazz Quartet; Wed. 28—Oscar Peterson Trio, Earl Hines Quartet with Marva Josie; Thu. 29—American Folk, Blues and Gospel Festival; Fri. 30—Buddy Rich and Orchestra, Anita O'Day, Johnny Patrick Big Band; Sat. 31—Dave Brubeck Quartet featuring Gerry Mulligan.

 **SPONTANEOUS Music Ensemble;** Music Now is sponsoring, with financial assistance from the Arts

Council, eleven concerts by the Spontaneous Music Ensemble during October and November. The group will be a septet, and the programme will be a new 5-part composition by John Stevens called *Source*, composed under an Arts Council Living Artists award.

This is the second scheme of this nature. The first, also administered by Music Now, involved Music Improvisation Company — Evan Parker (sop), Derek Bailey (el-g); Hugh Davies (electronics), Jamie Muir (perc) — and took place in the spring, with twelve concerts in Brighton, Bristol, Coventry, Leeds, Norwich and the Greater London area.

The dates for John Stevens's Spontaneous Music Ensemble concerts are as follows: — October 3—Merseyside Arts Association, Liverpool; 6—Moray Arts Club, Elgin, Scotland; 7—Sheffield University Music Department; 8—Aberdeen Arts Centre; 10—Northern Open Workshop, Halifax; 16—Huddersfield Institute of Contemporary Arts; 18—Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury; 23—Uppingham School, Rutland; 25—Gresham's School, Norfolk, November 11—Beaford Centre, Devon; 16—Leicester University Arts Week.



# THE NEW BLUES



EDITED BY TONY RUSSELL

## 1) Blues Masters Of The 30s

**C**URRENT BLUES appreciation displays some odd prejudices, but one of the most remarkable is that against urban black music of the '30s and early '40s. The dominant artists of this period number most of the black audience's best loved names: Big Bill and Bumble Bee Slim, Leroy Carr and his 'Buddy' Bill Gaither, Jimmie Gordon and Johnnie Temple, Washboard Sam and Walter Davis, Roosevelt Sykes and Peetie Wheatstraw, Tampa Red and Kokomo Arnold, Jazz Gillum and Joe Pullum, Lonnie Johnson and Sonny Boy Williamson. Yet if you look for discussions of their work, you must turn, generally, to faded magazines of the early and mid-'60s. Gillum and Williamson may have been written up well, but where will you find articles on Bumble Bee Slim or Joe Pullum? Bob Groom's recent piece on Bill Gaither (*Blues World* 29) was exceptional.

**T**HE CRITICISM usually voiced against most of these men is that they were monotonous, lacked individuality, used stereotyped accompaniments and failed to match the emotional depth of the country bluesmen. Such accusations miss the point; these musicians performed for relatively sophisticated city blacks, who looked for hipness, flipness and an up-to-date vocabulary, musical and verbal. To this audience *Monte Carlo Blues* meant more than *Magnolia blues*; *Tired of your line of jive* more than *Mistreated blues* or *Going away blues*. Record-buyers liked familiar musical devices, certainly, but the accompaniments were often as 'personalised' as in country blues circles. Carr, Sykes, Wheatstraw, Pullum — they were as readily recognisable as Patton and Stokes and Jim Jackson. Of course there were conventions; the 'Bluebird beat' is not wholly a myth. But they existed because they were needed, and if they sometimes seem jaded one must remember that the stars of the '30s were far more frequently recorded than their rural predecessors. To ask for a new approach on every Bumble Bee Slim record is to require a power of invention which no blues musician attained before or since.

**B**LUES in the '30s were much affected by developments in the record industry; by concepts then novel, but now standard in popular music. A-and-R men were discovering the 'house sound', the 'follow-up' and the 'cover version'. They learned that the song could be more important than the singer; then again, that certain singers sold certain kinds of songs better than others. As various instrumental styles enjoyed a vogue, they had repercussions on other people's recordings; to add to the appeal of a performance, one could employ accompanists whose 'sound' was already established. Big Bill and Kokomo Arnold and Casey Bill Weldon were hot properties; why not use them to back up other singers — particularly new names? No need to credit them on the record-labels; the listener could pick them out for himself. Even if he could not, a favourable response was almost guaranteed; an instrumental continuity, so to speak, was being created. The purchaser was eased into a receptive frame of mind by his half-conscious recognition of the sound.

**T**HE NOTION of the 'cover version' is specially important. With Vocalion, Bluebird and Decca competing for sales, there was every reason for the imitation of distinctive new sounds. Bob Groom called his article on Bill Gaither 'The Incredible Blues Imitator'; the term could as well, or better, have been applied to Bumble Bee Slim or, to a degree, to Jimmie Gordon or — for a while — Josh White. The role of Lester Melrose was all-important; as an article in the second *American Folk Music Occasional* reveals, he worked with virtually every urban blues musician through this decade; the list of names he recalled fills a long paragraph. 'From March, 1934, to February, 1951', he claimed, 'I recorded at least 90 percent of all rhythm-and-blues talent for RCA Victor and Columbia records.' Hardly surprising, then, that vocal and instrumental mannerisms were disseminated among the top-selling artists, and it became difficult, at times, to say whether one was listening to Bluebird's Leroy Carr imitator or his Decca counterpart — or indeed to Leroy

Carr himself. The fact that more or less the same musicians might be accompanying both the imitators would add to the confusion — which would be further complicated by the use of pseudonyms, by reissues, and by the release of a single performance on half a dozen or more labels simultaneously. It's easy to see why some collectors fly from this complexity to the clearer air of country blues, but there is a good deal of pleasure and instruction to be derived from the recording activity of the '30s — which is why this series of articles, 'Blues Masters of the '30s', has been conceived.

**W**E HOPE TO examine most of the artists listed at the beginning of this introduction, discussing a large number of their recordings and illustrating their themes (which are often very interesting indeed), their musical qualities and their appeal — as far as we can ascertain it — to the black audience. Collectors familiar with hitherto published biographical information will, we hope, pardon its reappearance here, which is intended to bring the musicians alive, as far as possible, to readers less involved in blues historiography. That the information is often scanty is evidence of the neglect which these men have suffered. The sad thing is that it is not quite too late to do some of the necessary research, yet we see little likelihood of its being done. Particularly annoying, this, when you reflect that such research would undoubtedly illumine the relationship between blues and jazz developments during the decade; a relationship seldom explored, yet of immense relevance to enthusiasts alike of urban blues and of mainstream jazz. TONY RUSSELL

## 2) Son House

IN PERSON AND IN RETROSPECT

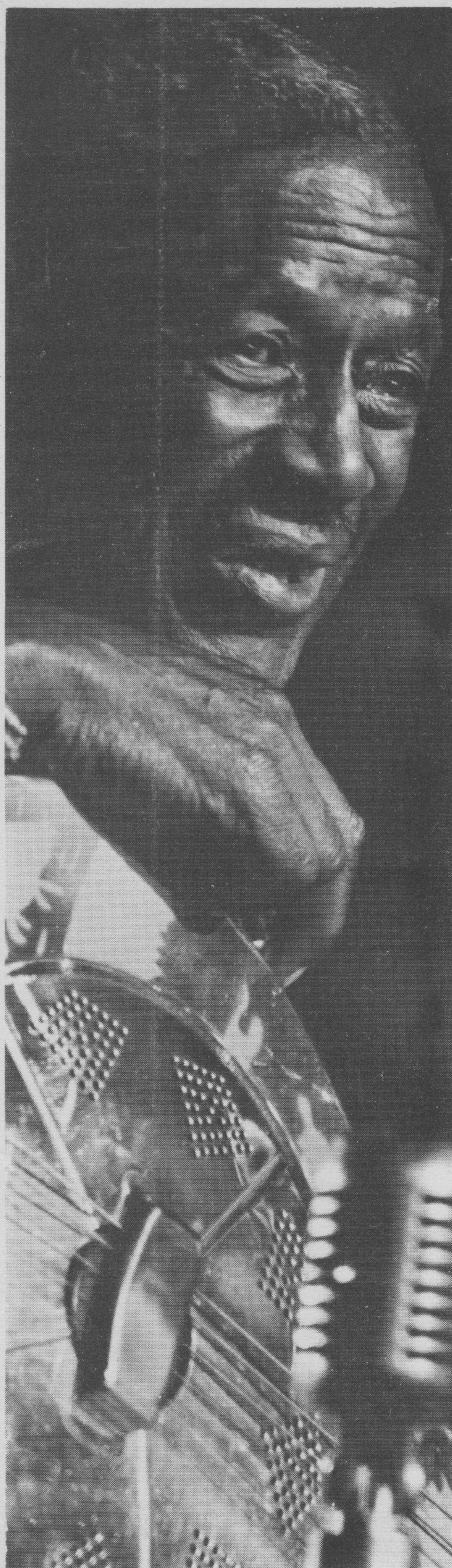
**T**HE APPEARANCES of Son House in England in June and July this year were almost certainly our last chances to see this figure so important in blues history. It's extraordinary to reflect that not so many years ago very few people in England would have heard of Son House, and fewer still would have heard his records. Reissue of his Paramounts and issue of most of his Library of Congress material led to awareness of his importance; his rediscovery soon followed (1963), seeming to those of us who lived and waited through that time like finding Buddy Bolden playing in a pit orchestra. The Columbia LP was recorded in 1965 and in 1967 we had our first chance to see him in Europe. This year's tour was preceded by the issue of a Roots



LP which provoked mixed critical reception, as indeed had the Columbia.

IT IS DIFFICULT to analyse the effect of these concerts. His appearance at St. Pancras Town Hall on July 10 was, viewed with detachment, short, badly managed and not easy to commend for musical quality. Yet it was greeted with two standing ovations. It is hard to believe that all, or even the majority, of those present were acquainted with his earlier work and its implications, and it's equally hard to believe the performance itself occasioned the response. For those familiar with his earlier work it was all but impossible to obtain any detachment, the emotional impact, nearly nostalgic, was too great. There *had* been a noticeable deterioration since his 1967 tour, but this is not unexpected in a man nearly seventy years old. His performances through the tour were variable; for example, the recording for Radio 1 was much better than the first St Pancras concert. The effect of that hollering voice was still spine-chilling, and if one could ignore the fumbled guitar licks an impression of the power of Mississippi blues could be obtained.

MENTION has been made of Son's earlier career and recordings, and perhaps now is an appropriate time to consider the legend of Eddie James House Jr. Dockery's Plantation, Cleveland, Mississippi, must have been the place to be in the late '20s in the Delta, for there could be found Son House, Charley Patton and Willie Brown. Fortunately all three got to record, although Patton's popularity and versatility resulted in an earlier start and more sessions for him. Only six of the sides Son recorded for Paramount in his late twenties have been discovered, all similar, so it is difficult to form a comprehensive opinion of his talents at this time. He next recorded for the Library of Congress in 1941 and 1942, solo and with his old partner Willie Brown and others. These sides are more varied in content and perhaps represent the peak of House's career as it is available to us on record. Son was then out of the eye of the world until his rediscovery. His reputation, then, rests on a comparatively small recorded output, and also on his seemingly great influence on subsequent developments in blues history. It's easy to point to a direct line, House-Robert Johnson-Muddy Waters and Elmore and so on, but it's certainly more complex than that. Although Mississippi blues has been more extensively researched than any other area of the field, there are still many un-



SON HOUSE

answerable questions — many, indeed, that will never be answered. BOB YATES

### 3) Discographical Notes

1. No exact date is given in Leadbitter and Slaven for Son House's Columbia session; this was recorded in New York City on April 12, 13 and 14, 1965. (See *Jazz Journal*, July 1965.)

2. As already pointed out by Bob Groom in *Blues World*, Charlie McCoy is present on guitar on Tommy Johnson's *Bye bye blues* as well as the other three tracks from this session. (See the Editor's review of Roots RL-330 in the July *JM*.)

3. Elmore James and John Brim 'Tough' (Blue Horizon 7-63204): two previously unissued tracks on this LP, *Ice cream man* and *Lifetime baby*, credited to John Brim, sound very unlike the other two Brims included and the remainder of his output. On aural evidence and matrix proximity it is probable that these are in fact by Jimmy Rogers. Matrices run as follows.

7501 Muddy Waters (vcl, g); Little Walter (hca); Jimmy Rogers (g); Big Crawford (bs); Elgar Edmonds (d)  
*Turn your lamp down low*

7502 *Loving man*

7503 Jimmy Rogers (vcl, g); Little Walter (hca); unknown b, d  
*Left me with a broken heart*

7504 *Act like you love me*

7505 ? Jimmy Rogers (vcl, g); hca, b, d  
*Ice cream man*

7506 *Lifetime baby*

7506/6 are credited to Brim in the Chess files; see Leadbitter and Slaven, pp. 27 and 377. Note the corrected personnel on 7503-6.

4. A curious (and very scarce) LP is Cook 5002 by K.C. Douglas, with the unusual title of 'A Dead-Beat Guitar And The Mississippi Blues'. Recorded in Oakland, Cal., in 1956 (according to Leadbitter and Slaven), it has all the marks of a domestic session — doors slamming, background chuckles and false starts. 'Collected by Sam Eskin', says the label; has any reader further information? The 'Road Recordings' which Cook issued in its 5000 series don't, to our knowledge, include other blues sets, but 5016 and 5017 are fascinating location recordings of Trinidadian folk music, and it would be satisfying to assemble a label listing for publication in this column. Not so difficult an undertaking, for several Cooks have turned up in remainder racks in this country. (We should be delighted to hear from any reader who can swell our Cook collection for us). Returning to 5002, the fifth title in the L and S listing should be *I got the key* (only), and the title *Blues* should be inserted between *Mercury blues* and *I met the blues this morning*. The track *Casey Jones* consists of speech and unaccompanied singing; K.C. begins with a verse of the white spiritual *Life's railway to heaven*, pauses to complain of his bad memory, and recalls five stanzas of *Casey Jones*. An intriguing issue, but terribly surfacy. It is reported that only 250 copies were pressed.

TONY RUSSELL and BOB YATES





## (14) International Record Scene

**F**OLLOWING THE listing of the latest Old Masters issues last month several readers have enquired about the first fifteen releases. Complete details follow:-

### Old Masters TOM-1 — EMMETT MILLER AND HIS GEORGIA CRACKERS 1928—1929

*God's river; I ain't got nobody; Lovesick blues; Anytime; St. Louis blues; Take your tomorrow; Dusky stevedore; She's funny that way; You're the cream in my coffee; Lovin' Sam; Big bad Bill; The pickaninnie's paradise; The blues singer from Alabam'; That's the good old sunny south*

### Old Masters TOM-2 — THE GREATEST JAZZ BANDS

*Rumba negra* (BENNIE MOTEN ORCHESTRA); *Ride Red ride* (MILLS BLUE RHYTHM BAND); *Quality shout* (PAUL HOWARD'S QUALITY SERENADERS); *The terror* (CLIFF JACKSON ORCHESTRA); *Boot to boot* (JESSE STONE AND HIS BLUES SERENADERS); *My pretty girl* (JEAN GOLDKETTE ORCHESTRA); *Variety stomp* (FLETCHER HENDERSON ORCHESTRA); *Shakin' the African* (DON REDMAN ORCHESTRA); *Ozark mountain blues* (MISSOURIANS); *Swampfire* (CLYDE McCOY ORCHESTRA); *Cotton Club stomp* (DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA); *Pippo No La Sa* (TULLIO MOBIGLIA ORCHESTRA)

### Old Masters TOM-3 — UNIVERSITY SIX 1925—1927

*Desdemona; I love my baby; Dustin' the donkey; Tiger rag; San; Ace in the hole; If I only had you; Brand new mama; It takes a good woman; Baby knows how; Lonely eyes; Sister Kate; Beale Street blues; The cat*

### Old Masters TOM-4 — GREAT JAZZ OF 1930

*The man from the south; St. James infirmary; Mysterious Mose; Bessie couldn't help it; On revival day; There's a wah wah girl in Agua Caliente* (RUBE BLOOM AND HIS BAYOU BOYS); *Bug-a-boo* (RED NICHOLS AND HIS FIVE PENNIES); *Beale Street blues; If I could be with you one hour tonight* (GIL RODIN ORCHESTRA); *Alexander's ragtime band; Put on your old grey bonnet; Casa Loma stomp; Royal Garden blues; San Sue Strut* (CASA LOMA ORCHESTRA)

### Old Masters TOM-5 — RARE JAZZ OF THE TWENTIES

*Georgia pines; Song of the bayou* (MARION HARDY'S ALABAMIANS); *Shanghai honeymoon; Good feeling blues; Aunt Jemina stomp; St. Louis bound* (KANSAS CITY STOMPERS); *Original black bottom dance* (JIMMY WADE'S CLUB ALABAMA ORCHESTRA); *Black Maria; Chinnin' and chattin' with May; Loving you the way I do; Penalty of love* (BUBBER MILEY AND HIS MILEAGE MAKERS); *Torrid rhythm* (CLIFF JACKSON'S CRAZY CATS); *Third rail* (WALTER BARNES AND HIS ROYAL CREOLIANS); *I'm wondering who* (FRANKIE TRUMBAUER ORCHESTRA)

### Old Masters TOM-6 — CHARLESTON CHASERS 1929—1930

*Ain't misbehavin'; Moanin' low; Red hair and freckles; Lovable and sweet; What wouldn't I do for that man; Turn on the heat; Cinderella Brown; Sing, you sinners; Here comes Emily Brown; Wasn't it nice?; Loving you the way I do; You're lucky to me*

### Old Masters TOM-7 — VENUTI-LANG 1929—1930

*That's the good old sunny south; Weary river; I'm in seventh heaven; Little pal; Chant of the jungle; That wonderful something is love; Apple blossoms; Raggin' the scale; Put and take; Promises; I am only human after all; Out of breath; Sweet Sue*

### Old Masters TOM-8 — VENUTI-LANG 1927—1928

*A mug of ale; I must be dreaming; 'Tain't so, honey, 'tain't so; Because my baby don't mean maybe now; Just like a melody out of the sky; The man from the south; Pretty Trix; Pickin' cotton; I'm on the crest of a wave; Sensation; Doin' things; I must have that man; My honey's lovin' arms; Goin' home*

### Old Masters TOM-9 — GOOFUS FIVE AND TED WALLACE AND HIS ORCHESTRA 1927

*Farewell blues; Sister Kate; Wang wang blues; Ain't that a grand and glorious feeling?; Clementine; Nothing does-likes like it used to do-do-do. I left my sugar standing in the rain* (GOOFUS FIVE); *Cornfed; Buffalo rhythm; Zulu wail; Mary; Changes; For my baby; Cobblestones* (TED WALLACE AND HIS ORCHESTRA)

### Old Masters TOM-10 — DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA/ELLINGTON ENCORE

*I've got to be a rug cutter; Rock city rock; You better know it; I got it bad and that ain't good; Ain't nothin' nothin' baby; Azure; Peckin'; Stevedore's serenade; La de doody do; Please forgive me; Way low; You can count on me*

### Old Masters TOM-11 — THE COLLEGE JAZZ BANDS 1926—1930

*Papa's gone; No trumps; Daniel's blues; Loveless love* (FRED GARDNER'S TEXAS UNIVERSITY TROUBADOURS); *Wabash blues; San; Canzone-Amorosa; Weary blues* (BARBARY COAST ORCHESTRA); *Puttin' on the ritz; With you; And then your lips met mine; Blue again; If I'm without you; Dream child* (CARL WEBSTER'S YALE COLLEGIANS); *Tiger rag; China boy* (PURPLE PIRATE ORCHESTRA)

### Old Masters TOM-12 — HOTSYS TOTSYS GANG 1929—1930

*What a night; St. Louis blues; Some fun; Can't we get together; Sweet Savannah Sue; Harvey; March of the hoodlums; Stardust; Manhattan rag; What kinda man is you?; My little honey and me; Barbaric; High and dry; I wonder what my gal is doing now; Crazy 'bout my gal; Railroad man*

### Old Masters TOM-13 — PHIL NAPOLEON 1929—1931

*You can't cheat a cheater; Anything; Mean to me; My kinda love* (NAPOLEON'S EMPERORS); *Gettin' hot* (JOE VENUTI AND HIS ORCHESTRA); *You made me love you* (MIFF MOLE'S LITTLE MOLERS); *Jazz me blues; St. Louis gal; Anything; My honey's lovin' arms* (ORIGINAL MEMPHIS FIVE); *Gotta feelin' for you; Low-down rhythm; Harlem madness; Navy blues; Red hot Chicago; Chinnin' and chattin' with May* (HOT AIR MEN)

### Old Masters TOM-14 — DORSEY BROTHERS 1928

*Mary Ann; Persian rug; Coquette; Yale blues; Indian cradle song; My melancholy baby; That's my mammy; Dixie dawn; Evening star; Forgetting you; Was it a dream, Part 2; 'Round evening; Out of the dawn; Sally of my dreams; She's funny that way; Cross roads; (all DORSEY BROTHERS ORCHESTRA)*

### Old Masters TOM-15 — DORSEY BROTHERS 1928—1930

*Mean to me; Button up your overcoat; I'll never ask for more* (DORSEY BROTHERS ORCHESTRA); *Daddy change your mind* (TOMMY DORSEY); *Prayin' the blues* (JIMMY DORSEY); *Am I blue?; Baby oh where can you be; Breakaway* (TRAVELLERS)





REINHARDT

TEAGARDEN

GRAPPELLE

HINES

*Singin' in the rain* (takes A and B); *Your mother and mine*; *Maybe who knows* (DORSEY BROTHERS ORCHESTRA); *Can this be love?*; *Fine and dandy*; *I can't make a man* (TRAVELLERS); *Tiger rag* (HOME TOWNERS)

All but TOM-2, TOM-5 and TOM-10 feature the white New Yorkers of the 'twenties and early 'thirties, the Old Masters label specialising in this field as previously mentioned. For European collectors TOM-2 has the disadvantage of including few tracks not already available, but TOM-5 has many interesting titles those by the Kansas City Stompers having Frank Melrose, Junie Cobb, Jimmy Bertrand and Cecil Irwin included in the personnel. The tracks on the Ellington LP include several — presumably from transcription sources ) not available elsewhere, plus some of the Irving Mills recordings released on the Master label in the late 'thirties. A couple of readers have enquired about other Ri-Disc LPs after noting details of the Cliff Jackson item in the September issue. I regret that I have no idea as to the contents of Ri-Disc 1 and 2 but a listing of Ri-Disc 3 and 4 follow. Further details of issues can probably be obtained from H.J. Richner, Obermosstrasse, 8332 Russikon, Switzerland.

#### Ri-Disc 3 — FATS WALLER AND THE BLUES

*Stingaree blues* (ALBERTA HUNTER); *You can't do what my last man did* (ANNA JONES); *Maybe some day*; *When your troubles are just like mine* (HAZEL MEYERS); *Mama's losing a mighty good chance*; *Ain't got nobody to grind my coffee* (CAROLINE JOHNSON); *What's the matter now*; *You get mad* (ROSA HENDERSON); *Tain't nobody's bus'ness if I do*; *You*

*got everything a sweet mama needs* (SARA MARTIN); *I'm certainly gonna see 'bout that*; *Squabbling blues* (SARA MARTIN AND CLARENCE WILLIAMS)

#### Ri-Disc 4 — HANK DUNCAN — HOT PIANO

*Carolina shout*; *Beale Street blues*; *Handful of keys*; *Alligator crawl*; *Ain't misbehavin'*; *Honeysuckle rose*; *Squeeze me*; *Oh lady be good*; *Big boogie woogie*; *Junk man rag*; *Maple leaf rag*; *St. Louis blues*; *Maple leaf rag (2nd version)*; *Upbeat*; *Changes, always on my mind*; *I give you my world*; *Liza*; *I got rhythm*

The tracks on the LP by the late Hank Duncan are derived from two studio sessions made in the mid and late 'forties, and from a radio broadcast of 1950 when Duncan was resident at Nick's club. Another two tracks by the late Cliff Jackson, made under studio conditions during the period March—June 1969, have now appeared on a piano anthology LP, details of which are:-

#### Master Jazz MJR 8105 — MASTER JAZZ PIANO, VOLUME 1

*Blues for Betty C*; *I want a little girl* (SONNY WHITE); *57th Street blues*; *I would do anything for you* (CLAUDE HOPKINS); *Friday strut*; *Lady be good* (JAY McSHANN); *Memphis blues*; *Squeeze me* (CLIFF JACKSON); *Feeling fine blues*; *I got rhythm* (EARL HINES)

Master Jazz is a U.S. label with an address of Box 579, Lenox Hill Station, New York City, N.Y. 10021, U.S.A., and all titles on the above LP were recorded during the period indicated. This is a stereo recording incidentally

In recent months I have noticed a label around called Caete and am grateful to Dave Carey for giving me details of three LPs issued to date. Dave tells me that the label is of Swedish origin and that he stocks copies of the following:-



**Caete LP-1 — LEO WATSON AND THE SPIRITS OF RHYTHM**  
*That's what I hate about love; Shoutin' in the amen corner; Way down yonder in New Orleans; I've got the world on a string; From Monday on; My old man; I'll be ready when the great day comes; Rhythm; I got rhythm; For he's a jolly good fellow; Let's get happy; Ja da; It's the tune that counts; Man with a mandolin*

**Caete LP-2 — DON BYAS PRIVATE RECORDINGS 1944–1945 (JAZZ LABORATORY SERIES, VOLUME 1)**

*Indiana; I got rhythm; Rose room; Worried blues; Don't blame me; My ideal; Sweet Lorraine; Sweet and lovely; Stardust*

**Caete LP-3 — SLIM AND SLAM**

*There's no two ways about it; Chinatown my Chinatown; That's what you call romance; Ti-pi tin; 8, 9 and 10; Oh lady be good; Dancing on the beach; Ferdinand the bull; Tutti frutti; Look-a-there; Jump session; Vol vist du gaily star; Dopey Joe; Buck dance rhythm*

Caete 1 has a subtitle of "With Bunny Berigan and Red McKenzie". *Way down yonder, I've got the world* and *From Monday* were in fact issued under McKenzie's name, while *For He's* and *Let's get* were originally issued on the Commodore label under Leonard Feather's name, with vocals by Watson and a personnel including Bobby Hackett and Pete Brown. *Ja da, It's the tune* and *Man with* were issued as by Leo Watson and were recorded for U.S. Decca in August 1939. As far as I know, no personnel has ever been published for the last three titles but if indeed Bunny Berigan is to be heard on the LP it must be on these. The other six titles are by the Spirits of Rhythm. On the Byas LP the first two tracks — the only ones previously available — are by Byas and Slam Stewart, *Rose room* has these two plus Kirt Bradford (alto) and Jimmy Jones (p); *Worried* has Gene Sedric on clarinet in place of Bradford, *Don't, My ideal* and *Sweet* have Byas, Jones and Stewart, while *Sweet and lovely* and *Stardust* are by Byas, Stewart and pianist John Mehegan. On Caete 3 *There's no two* is in fact a Frank Newton recording with a vocal by Slim Gaillard, the remaining tracks presenting all but five of the Slim and Slam issued recordings.

Mark Gardner reports that Django Reinhardt's last three French Decca sessions have appeared on LP, as follows:-

**Princesse 99.017 — DJANGO REINHARDT ET SON QUINTETTE**

*Keep cool; Fleche d'or; Troublant bolero; Nuits de Saint-Germain des Pres; Crazy rhythm; Anouman; Fine and dandy; D.R. blues; Le soir; Chez moi; I cover the waterfront; Deccapohonie*

The Princesse label is a French Decca subsidiary, and Mark reports that the recordings have been 'rechannelled for stereo' but sound quite reasonable on a mono setting.

While on the subject of Reinhardt, collectors who enjoy the music of the original Quintet with Stephane Grapelly might be interested in an LP that has just appeared, consisting of titles made during 1939–1941 by the Swedish violinist Emil Iwring with a group using the instrumentation and style of the French Hot Club Quintet. The label is of course Swedish Odeon.

**Odeon E054-34162 — SVENKSA HOTKVINTETTEN**

*Hallelujah; Stardust; I let a song go out of my heart; A bit of swing; Crazy rhythm; I surrender, dear; Opus 5; Honest and truly; Wham; I may be wrong; Lonely moments; Morning jump*

### Tours

THE PERSONNEL of the **Harry James** band, touring Britain since September 26th, is Harry James, Thomas Holden, Jack Poster, Walter Pfyl, Clarence Stine (tpt); Gail Martin, William Paynter, David Robbins (tbn); Bill Byrne, Donald Mohr (alt); Corky Corcoran, Gary Herbig (ten); Jack Watson (bar); Jack Perciful (p); John Smith (Fender bs); Sonny Payne (d); Cathy Chemi, Glenn Raye (vcl). Remaining dates this month are October 1—Sheffield, City Hall; 2—Manchester, Free Trade Hall; 3—Southport, Floral Hall; 4—Leicester, De Montfort Hall; 5—Hull, Cecil Theatre.

Finally, the Australian Swaggie label has issued an excellent LP by the Bob Cats, as follows:—

**Swaggie S-1245 — THE BOB CATS**

*Stumbling; Who's sorry now; Coquette; Fidgety feet; You're driving me crazy; Can't we be friends; Loopin' the loop; Mama's gone, goodbye; March of the Bob Cats; Palesteen; Slow mood; Big foot jump; The big crash from China; Five point blues; Way down yonder in New Orleans; Do you ever think of me*

These titles are the original versions, recorded for U.S. Decca, and not later recreations.

ALBERT MCCARTHY

## (15) End Notes

WHO TAKES the clarinet solo on Henry Allen's *Biffly blues*? Although Albert Nicholas is present on the title and can clearly be heard at the end, the clarinet solo sounds very pedestrian for him and may well be by Charlie Holmes. Opinions on this would be welcome.

M. HUGUES Panassie, who supervised the date, answers my query in a review some months ago as to the exact trumpet soloists on the Dicky Wells Paris titles of July 12th, 1937. Shad Collins is the soloist on *Dinah* and *Nobody's blues*, Bill Dillard on *I found a new baby* and *Hot Club blues*.

MY INFORMATION on the Sammy Brown date in 'End Notes' (8-August) needs revision, though the basic fact that Brown was a one man band remains correct. This will be left until I can refer to the article mentioned, but as this note was dealing with Lofton and his dwindling recordings it is worth noting that there is still some unissued material around. The new Yazoo L-1025 by Cripple Clarence Lofton/Walter Davis has six previously unissued tracks, taken from the following seven — *State Street blues, South side mess around, Streamline train, Strut that thing, Jook joint stomp. Change my mind blues* and *Brown skin girls*. In 1943 Pete Stern of Highland Park, Illinois wrote me that he had recorded Lofton a few years previously, at the latter's residence, the titles made being *Streamline train, I don't know, Travelin' blues, Mercy blues, Pitchin' boogie* and *Mistaken blues*. I am grateful to Eric Woodward of Smethwick for reminding me of this information, and one hopes that Mr. Stern is still around and has retained his recordings. Perhaps one of the U.S. blues labels could make an attempt to locate Mr. Stern?

THE PERSONNEL of *Old folks shuffle/Morocco blues* (Banner/Regal/Domino, etc.) by Joe Jordan's Ten Sharps and Flats is given as Ed Allen, William Logan (tpt); Joe Brown (tbn); Benny Morton; Toby Turner (alt, clt); Clarence Miller (ten); Joe Jordan (p); Mike McKendrick (bj); Harry Gray (tu); Jasper Taylor (d) in the booklet accompanying the U.S. Columbia 'Sound of Harlem' set. In *Jazz Records 1897–1931* (I have not yet seen the new edition) Brian Rust gave a similar personnel omitting the names of the two alto clarinet men and drummer, but listing Bergen Moten brass bass. This personnel applies to *Senegalese stomp/Morocco blues* made three months prior to the Banner session, but the implication is that it also applies to the later date. Now Bertrand Demeusy has come through with a personnel for both dates as given to him by Joe Jordan himself and substantiated by a contemporary picture of the band, which we may assume to be authentic. It is Ed Allen, William Logan (tpt); Joe Brown (tbn); Bennie Mottom (1st alto, clt); Clarence Miller (ten); James Nichols (3rd alto, clt); Joe Jordan (p); Mike McKendrick (bj); Ed Bergon (bs); Jasper Taylor (d).



# BOOKER ERVIN

(1930–1970)

JAZZ SUFFERED another distressing loss on August 31 with the death of tenor saxophonist Booker Telleferro Ervin II in Bellvue Hospital, New York, of a kidney ailment. Ervin was born in Denison, Texas, on October 31, 1930, and was in the great tradition of Texas tenormen. His father, a trombonist, worked for a time with Buddy Tate. Ervin inherited his father's trombone and played that instrument from the age of eight until he was 13. While in the Air Force in 1950 Ervin taught himself to play the saxophone.

Discharged from the Forces in 1953, Ervin studied in Boston for a couple of years and within a short time was playing with the rhythm and blues band of Ernie Fields in the southern states. His first recordings were made in about 1956 with Fields for the Combo label. In 1958 Ervin went to New York, and, after washing dishes for awhile, joined the Charlie Mingus group in November of that year. He remained with the bassist's small group for several years and enhanced many Mingus recordings, notably *Jazz Portraits* (United Artists), *Mingus Ah Um* (Columbia), *Mingus Dynasty* (Columbia) and *Mingus, Mingus, Mingus, Mingus, Mingus* (Impulse). He recorded the first LP under his own name for Bethlehem in 1960 and made sessions for Savoy and Candid before signing with Prestige in 1963. The series of nine albums, all supervised by Don Schlitten, represent the cream of Ervin's recorded work. On five of them he was supported by the outstanding rhythm section of Jaki Byard, Richard Davis and Alan Dawson who invariably inspired Booker tremendously. During his association with Prestige, Ervin also recorded with other leaders including Pony Poindexter, Eric Kloss and Jaki Byard.

From 1964-66 Ervin worked in Europe, usually appearing as a single. Regrettably he never was given a club booking in England during this period but he did record with Ted Curson in Holland (Fontana) and made two LPs for Prestige in Germany late in 1964. One of these teamed Booker with one of his influences — Dexter Gordon — and the result was an outstanding session. Returning to the States, Booker completed his contract for Prestige and then signed with Liberty who have issued three LPs under his name — two on Pacific Jazz and one on Blue Note. The latter recording, *The In Between*, was the most artistically successful of the three.

Ervin was a very powerful player whose improvisations some listeners found overwhelming because of the raw intensity which was an important aspect of his music. He was a remarkably consistent musician and I cannot recall hearing an indifferent solo by him. In 1967 I attended a Pacific Jazz recording date under Ervin's leadership in New York. The conception of the record was slightly silly — all the songs were associated with American towns or cities — but Ervin, the patient professional that he was, turned in solo after solo on repeated takes that transcended the limitations of the musical material at hand.

In the light of his extremely high standards, it is difficult to single out particular Ervin recordings for special praise but mention must be made of *The Space Book*, *The Freedom Book* and *The Song Book* as being indispensable to a full understanding of his achievements. Those seeking the less well known records on which he appeared with such people as Bill Barron and Teddy Charles are



referred to Roy Wilbraham's *Booker Ervin Discography* which is currently appearing in *Discographical Forum*. Of more than passing interest are the several long players he made with organist Don Patterson for Prestige. A fine album on Randy Weston's Bakton label also featured Ervin extensively.

Booker Ervin leaves a wife, Jane; a son, Booker; and a daughter, Lynn. Ira Gitler's words are a fitting epitaph for this exceptional musician, "Booker Ervin's tenor is like a giant steamroller of a brush, painting huge patterns on a canvas as wide and high as the sky. There is nothing small about his sound, his soul, or his talent." Listen to any Ervin solo and the truth of that appraisal is clearly evident.

MARK GARDNER



**MA RAINEY AND THE CLASSIC BLUES SINGERS** by Derrick Stewart-Baxter. Published by Studio Vista, London, pp.112, 61 illus. Price 13/- (27/- hardbound)

**RECORDING THE BLUES** by R.W.M. Dixon and J. Godrich. Published by Studio Vista, London, pp.112, 56 illus. 2 charts. Price 13/- (27/- hardbound).

# A BLUES bookshelf still doesn't occupy very many inches these days, and almost anything that adds to it is welcome. The *Blues Paperbacks* series (these are two of the first batch of four), with twelve issues already planned, looks like filling in some of the gaps in blues scholarship. A surprising amount of what has gone before has been done in England, and our debt to Mr. Oliver and his books is tremendous (as is our debt to *Blues Unlimited* in the magazine world); although the onus of writing has moved away from him slightly, he retains overall editorial responsibility for this series. (Perhaps this English domination of a branch of American studies is not so surprising when one considers that the Germans are the most intense students of English literature, and that the Londoner never visits museums or national monuments in his own city.)

*Recording* and *Ma Rainey* show almost polar characteristics in presentation and style. Perhaps no-one is better qualified than those ace discographers, Messrs. Godrich and Dixon, to give us a survey of pre-war blues recording. It might be argued that almost anybody could have drawn up the information in this book from published sources, but as G and D researched deeply in this field for many years while compiling *Blues and Gospel Records* and hence are responsible for the main source, and as they are the ones who bothered to compile this book, our thanks to them are no less. Here are traced out the varied fortunes of the record companies involved in recording blues — so varied that in the mid- and late 30s only three companies were left in the field, Columbia, Victor and Decca, the last-named only established in the States in 1934 anyway, although many of the label names were revived or carried over from the earlier period when many companies had laid down their contributions to blues history. Only Victor spanned the period with no change of ownership.

Also we are told which company recorded who, when, where, how often and sometimes given an indication of why. 112 pages less illustration space is no large space in which to pack as much information as there is here; as the book is mainly concerned with dates and figures, there is little room for stylistic extension, and the style is bare and functional. In some ways the emphasis of the book reflects the authors' previous work, and it would perhaps have been more interesting if a more eclectic approach, possibly partly anecdotal, had been adopted instead of giving information that could be easily gleaned from glancing at a few pages of *Blues & Gospel Records*. For instance, the only sales figures indicated are the initial pressing orders for Columbia 14000s given in Mahony's book; if figures are available it would be interesting to have, for example, justification of the assertion (p.90) that Washboard Sam "was perhaps the most popular singer of the late 30s" in terms of sales rather than number of records released. Further, the human side is almost lost in this avalanche of statistics text illustrative of what actually happened at recording sessions (many blues singers have stories in this line), quotes from those responsible for finding and recording artists, details of the distribution and sales of records and phonographs, and so on, could, one feels, have been used without detracting from the factual

value of the book and would have provided more valid basis for inference of company policy.

MR. STEWART-BAXTER's highly personal evocation of a nearly-dead part of blues history errs too much in the other direction. The information seems to be padded out with the author's reflections to fill the page quota (these will, one feels, jar on many reader's ears); this in spite of continued cries of "Too little space to do this artist justice". On p.35 we find: "The history of the blues is surrounded by myth and legend, for collectors, in the main, are incurable romantics, although few will admit this fact. This romanticism encourages the birth of fables and fairy stories. Undoubtedly this makes for colourful writing, but it does not help the earnest researcher to reach the truth". "Romanticism" and "colourful writing" seem to be borne out by, for example this passage on p.20, describing Lucille Hegamin's arrival in New York: "1919 came and New York was opening its doors to musicians, cabaret artists and blues singers. It was time to move on, a time to conquer fresh territories. So the Hegamins packed their belongings and came to that most fascinating of all places, that cruel bitch of a city that can fly one to stardom, or with one swift, lethal blow bring one crashing to earth. The fickle jade looked kindly on Lucille, she embraced her and gave her a welcome she will never forget . . ." At least the myths, legends, fables and fairy stories are absent, for much of the information here is based on interviews with and letters from blues singers and contemporary printed sources, often reproduced verbatim. Mr. Stewart-Baxter's work in interviewing many blues ladies when most other blues researchers had ignored them cannot be over-estimated. When such information is not forthcoming, however, he relies rather heavily on lists of their recordings, on which it would seem from the descriptions that every player was a superb instrumentalist (except poor Fletcher Henderson, who comes off rather badly). A little more discerning criticism would be helpful here.

The illustrations in both books are similar, portraits of singers, pictures of record labels and reproductions of contemporary publicity material. Many of the portraits will be familiar, and as always it's the record catalogues and such that prove most fascinating — for example Oriole stressing in its dealer's supplement that Sam Collins is a "real negro". An errata slip should accompany *Recording* to correct a bad transposition on p.100, but none of the copies I have seen has this.

Both books are valuable, if not perfect, "firsts" in their respective fields of blues research. The publishers are to be congratulated for their enterprise in treating the series as a marketable commercial proposition; there will always, of course, be scope for privately-produced specialist publications, but the chance for the general book-buying public to read and understand a little more is most welcome. I hope that sales justify Studio Vista's confidence and allow the series to continue.

BOB YATES

**BLACKS, WHITES AND BLUES** by Tony Russell;  
**SAVANNAH SYNCOPATORS—AFRICAN RETENTIONS IN THE BLUES** by Paul Oliver.  
Published by Studio Vista. Price 13/- (27/- hardbound)

# HOWEVER MUCH scholarship they possess within their own field, jazz historians usually rely on the findings of African musicologists when it comes to writing the opening chapters of their books. Which, on the face



of it, seems fair enough, for African music is a lifetime's study in itself. Yet, as Paul Oliver demonstrates in *Savannah Syncopators*, a little knowledge can still be a very dangerous thing. To generalise about "Africa", or even "West Africa", is to deny the cultural diversity of the area. Even our cherished notion of pentatonic slaves clashing with diatonic Europeans and thereby spawning the blues scale is something — so Oliver tells us — that needs to be looked at again.

Paul Oliver is familiar with West Africa, its geography, its climate, its vegetation as well as its music, and convinced that the complex rhythms produced by drum orchestras of the coastal rain-forest — the region mostly used for comparison — have nothing to do with the buoyant swing of jazz or blues. A likelier source, he suggests, lies northward, in the savannah belt, where large trees — and therefore large drums — are scarcer, and where various stringed and wind instruments are played by *griots*, hereditary musicians whose social status is ambiguous, privileged in some ways, underprivileged in others, often very wealthy yet considered so lowly by some tribes that their dead bodies are not allowed to desecrate the ground but have to be buried upright in trees and allowed to putrefy.

That the *griots'* music survived in North America seems to have been largely the result of its being acceptable to Protestant Anglo-Saxon slave owners, who looked on sculpture, wood-carving and mask-making — all part of another great African tradition — as so much idolatry, and who forbade drumming in case it passed on dangerous messages. (Only in Catholic New Orleans does drumming appear to have been allowed and the plastic arts tolerated.) Taken as a whole, Oliver's hypothesis is formidable. In fact, modest though this monograph looks, its 112 pages contain one of the most useful and penetrating contributions so far to the unravelling of where Afro-American music came from.

If Paul Oliver is concerned with deciding exactly what was taken from Africa to the New World, Tony Russell, in *Blacks, Whites and Blues*, concentrates on the interaction between black and white musicians and singers in North America. For although the performance techniques of both blues and jazz appear to derive from Africa (the horn players in the *griot* orchestras even use vocalised tone), the tunes that have often been played or sung — pieces as various as *Careless love* and *Casey Jones*, *Easy Rider* and *Mary, don't you weep* — belong to a repertoire common to both races. Until, at any rate, the blues took proper shape — and that was within this century. Even so, the blues influenced southern white musicians much more than we normally imagine. Russell quotes a Kentucky mountain musician, Roscoe Holcomb, as saying: "Up 'til then the blues were only inside me; Blind Lemon was the first to 'let out' the blues".

High-voiced blues singers such as Blind Lemon Jefferson, Little Brother Montgomery and Kokomo Arnold have, according to Paul Oliver, much more in common with West African vocalists than those with deeper voices. Indeed, artificially high pitching, falsetto cries and octave jumps can be found in both blues and the music of the *griots*. And the falsetto leap may have inspired Jimmie Rodgers to develop his blue yodel. Russell's book devoted plenty of space to Rodgers, an important artist by any standards, even if it is taken for granted that Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines were the accompanists on *Blue yodel No.9*. (After listening to the record again, for the first time in twenty years, the trumpeter still sounds like Louis but the piano playing seems stodgy for Hines.) What cannot be denied, however, is the surprising quality of racially mixed recordings that went on in this field.

True, Jelly Roll Morton appeared on a New Orleans Rhythm Kings session as early as 1923, and Bill Moore played trumpet in Ben Bernie's Orchestra throughout most of the 1920s — but Moore was light-skinned and "passing" anyway. Yet whether or not Jimmie Rodgers was accompanied by Louis Armstrong, he certainly recorded with the Louisville Jug Band, just as, in 1927, a Kentucky singer, Welby Toomey, recorded with Sammy Brown, a one-man-band player with six fingers on each hand, and Taylor's Kentucky Boys used a black fiddler, Jim Booker. Most bizarre of all, the black Shreveport musician, Oscar Woods, played and sang on record with Jimmy Davis, composer of *You are my sunshine*, twice

elected Governor of Louisiana and certainly no do-gooding liberal. Davis recorded double-entendre blues like *Yo Yo Mama*, and many of his songs — Russell quotes quite copiously — contain stanzas that turn up again and again in Negro blues. But anomalies abound, among them the fact that a black group — the Mississippi Sheiks — had a few records issued in the old-time lists, while the white Allen Brothers sued Columbia for \$250,000 after one of their records had been put out in the race series.

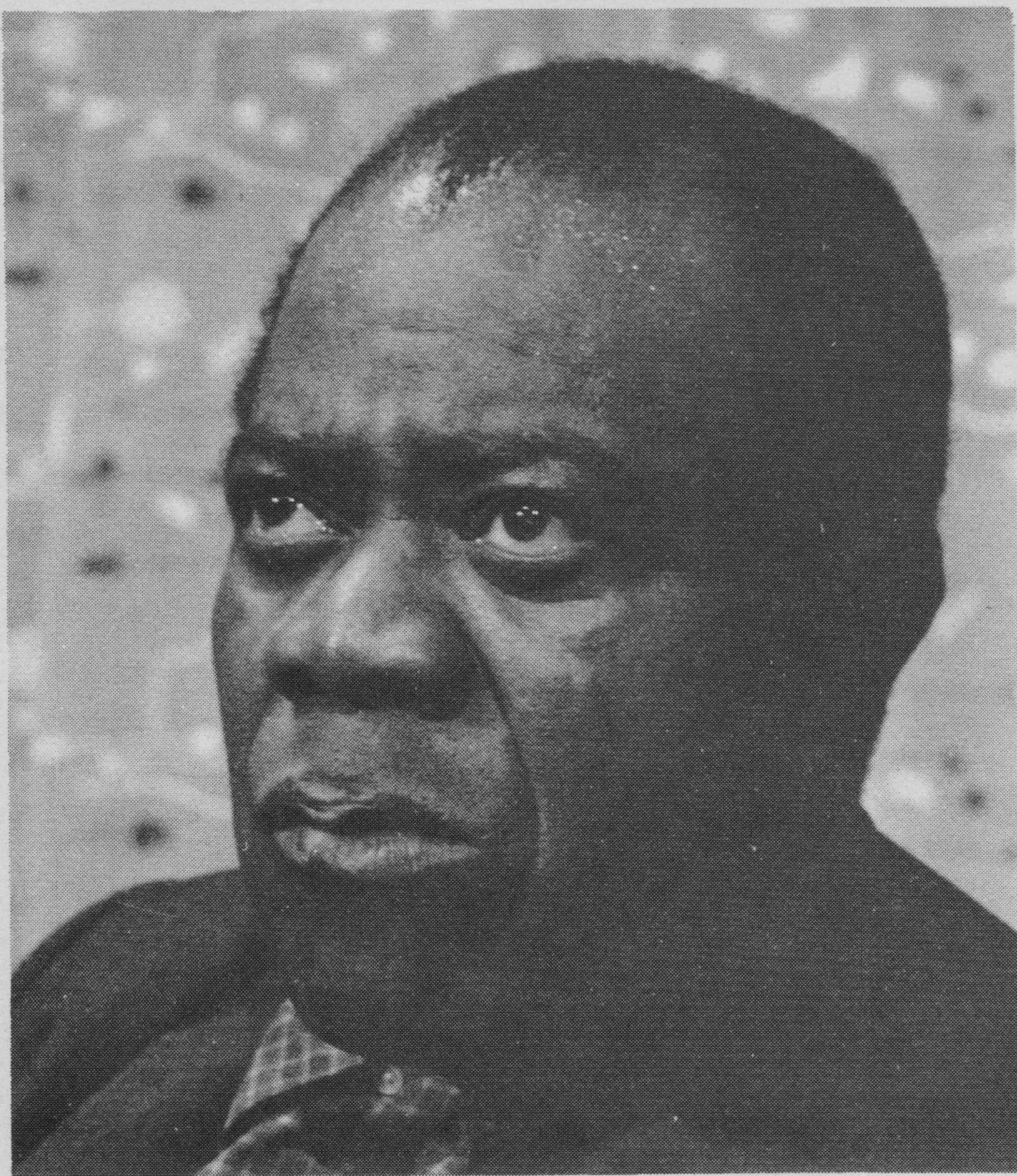
BUT WHILE the material that Tony Russell has assembled is fascinating, his conclusions are very tentative, with no attempt at providing a unifying theory. Nevertheless, an exploratory book on this subject may be more useful at the moment than jumping the fun with too many bright ideas. As it is there are wise suggestions, such as emphasizing that in many parts of the south the world seemed as mean for whites as for blacks, together with more dubious ones, like pointing out — it's really a theory in embryo — that the emergence of blues coincided with the foundation of the NAACP, du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* and the general quest for black identity. But perhaps Tony Russell will follow these matters up in his second volume (this one only takes us up to the early 1930s). He might also pursue further the reasons why white performers delighted, as he points out, in writing disaster songs, yet black ones sang of catastrophe — the 1927 Mississippi floods, for instance — only in personal terms. Similarly, most political and protest blues have been the work of white men, apart from the odd, self-conscious song, like Bill Broonzy's *Black, Brown and White*, devised, one suspects, to flatter self-righteous white audiences in Europe and America. Nobody needed to sing a song like that on Chicago's South Side.

CHARLES FOX

**SALUTE TO SATCHMO** by Max Jones and John Chilton. Published by *The Melody maker*. pp. 160, illus. Price 7/6d.

# THIS PAPERBACK tribute to Louis Armstrong contains enough information about him to make it an essential addition to any jazz book shelf, but fundamentally it is a volume which celebrates the greatness of this unique musician. The success of the book in this regard is itself a tribute to the knowledge, understanding and sensitivity which Messrs Jones and Chilton have brought to their task. The occasion of Louis' 70th birthday causes one to pause and consider what this man has brought to music. Some people would argue that Charlie Parker was a more inventive soloist; sometimes one may feel that Sidney Bechet's finest blues strike even deeper into the essence of jazz. But considered in perspective it is hardly contestable that Louis is the greatest soloist and the greatest innovator that this music has ever known. Neither Parker, nor Bechet — nor Ellington or Coltrane — could have done their work, valuable and touched with individual genius though it may be, without the solid basis of Armstrong's achievement. One only needs to listen to Bechet's or Ellington's earliest records — and Bechet's are of a considerable quality — to realise the importance of the musical grammar created by Armstrong in their mature work. The prodigious achievements of the early part of Armstrong's career, when he not only created the jazz solo as a viable form of expression but also laid down standards which have hardly been equalled, have often enough been celebrated. But the utter mastery of all his playing, the way in which he can make some little half chorus of melody sound so absolutely *right*, the way in which such passages have so easily and naturally what other soloists, even the best of them, seem to be striving for — this aspect of Armstrong's greatness is perhaps not sufficiently appreciated. That other jazz musicians are fully aware of Louis' contribution is apparent from a section of this book called *Layin' it on Louis*, where a selection of them, ranging from Bunk Johnson to Miles Davis, pay tribute to his work. And of course one should never forget that Armstrong in his every work proves that great artistry, complete integrity and the wish and the ability to spread human happiness are not exclusive things. Indeed nothing could be less sectarian, less neurotic, less attitudinising than the music of Louis Armstrong. And Max Jones's central essay in *Salute to Satchmo* spells this out clearly, along with much





more. This chapter is really a brief biography of Armstrong and is far and away the best thing I have read on the subject. Louis' career is detailed with understanding and perception; the man is seen as a whole, not some kind of super-idol. Controversial aspects of his life, such as his musical policy and the part played in it by Joe Glaser, and his reticence on racial matters contrasting with his outburst against Eisenhower, are covered fully. In addition to Jones's piece there is an interesting introduction by Leonard Feather, two pieces by Louis himself, a brief but stimulating review of his record output by John Chilton, a chronology of his career by the same writer, the chapter of quotes from fellow musicians, listings of Louis on film and on currently available records, many fine photographs and an index. The production of the book is moderate and the paper poor, but with such a wealth of matter this is really a bargain at the price.

EDDIE LAMBERT

**POEMS FOR JOHN COLTRANE** — An Anthology edited by John Taggart, Published as *Maps* 3 and available from John Taggart, Box 135, Newburg, Pennsylvania 17240, U.S.A. Price \$2.

# MOST POETRY is fairly ephemeral stuff and this stricture especially applies to much contemporary poetry, with its gimmicks and idiosyncrasies. I'm not saying this lightly. I've been reading and writing about poetry for some years now — and publishing it when I edited a little magazine — and a good poem, to me, is still worth most other things. But one has to be honest and most poetry doesn't last. In modern poetry we've reached a point now where it's possible to play about with techniques, to look graceful on the page and sound graceful to the ear, and yet, when all's said and done, to really say nothing. In this respect poetry is very like modern jazz — most of which is also ephemeral stuff — in that it's too often slick and clever and dull.

The failure to really say anything seems to me to be the fault of most of the poems in this anthology. I have great respect for many of the people in its pages — Barbara Guest, Larry Eigner, Robert Kelly, Theodore Enslin, John Newlove — and between them they've produced some fine poems. But they're not here. I'm not arguing about whether it's right for a poet to use jazz as a subject because there is no argument. He can use whatever he wants. But, as with anything else, the poem must come

naturally. Too many of these give the impression of being false structures:

of all  
that is beautiful  
in us, given  
each day of our lives  
for our eyes  
to receive  
from dreams  
as we awake

I'm left cold by this. I don't expect total clarity. I don't expect everything to be laid on for me in black and white. But I do expect a poet to say something of value — and it needn't necessarily be a great philosophical statement — instead of just playing around with words.

Robert Kelly is much better in his "Newark" poem, with its stark first line, "John Coltrane died this morning, Leroi's in jail", and he does cut through and convince the reader that he is writing about something other than writing poems. And Jackson MacLow's loose and long "24th Light Poem" moves along easily in its free-associational manner and isn't afraid to be witty. There's a depressing heaviness about some of the other poems and it's the kind of heaviness resulting from people taking themselves too seriously when they should, in fact, be taking the poem seriously. Wasn't Coltrane ever witty or sentimental or easy-going? You wouldn't think so from the poems.

THERE WAS a time when the hesitant and careful constructions most of the poets aim at were a genuine form of expression resulting from a search for a new style to carry the language and ideas of poets of the post-war period. But it has now hardened into a fashion that has become the dominant mode for certain groups of Americans and, unfortunately, has forced a sameness (a lack of individuality) on many of the poems they produce. This is true of this anthology and one wishes that the editor had made a far more catholic selection. As it is the following could almost be an extract from a good third of the poems:

I could wonder about all  
these things —  
or time itself  
wondering —  
a nourishment  
flat-handed  
and full —  
the retort which is  
the mainstay of a reply  
Take hold,  
oh, take hold slowly.  
To begin at the place  
of leaving off  
and then to  
sustain it.

It isn't enough. Is this all that Coltrane's dynamic music could inspire? At least the surreal poem produced by Fernando Arbelaez does partly re-create the "sheets of sound" impression of a Coltrane solo.

I respect the intentions of the editor of *Maps* when he started to compile this tribute to Coltrane, and I respect the poets for the fact that they know and like Coltrane's music. But good intentions are not enough. The poem eventually stands on its own feet or falls. Too many of those in this collection merely stumble along. Odd lines flicker into life. But why don't they burn with a bright flame? All heart and no art can be a big bore it's true, but art that deteriorates to a dallying with forms is depressing also.

Perhaps I might be excused for mentioning that if anyone wants to read a good poem which uses Coltrane as a jumping-off point they should hunt around for *Peace Feelers*, a pamphlet of poems by Donald Gardner recently published by Cafe Books. The title poem is a genuinely satisfying tribute to the power and influence of Coltrane's music as well as being a fine piece of writing. JIM BURNS





# Child Song / Henry Lowther Band

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